

"Vasquez, you snake of the jungle!" roared Perry, leaping forward and clinching. "Now; we'll settle the whole long account!" challenged the American boy. The Honduran strove, with fiendish cunning, to get the weapon's muzzle in line with Perry's head!

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THE GET-THERE BOYS;

OR

MAKING THINGS HUM IN HONDURAS.

By FRED WARBURTON.

CHAPTER I.

THINGS BEGIN TO HUM AT ONCE.

"I suppose a fellow can be happy here—when he gets used to it!"

Yet there was a note of more than discontent in Jack Perry's manly young voice.

"I'd walk to the United States if I knew the way," grumbled Mart.

"Would you?" demanded Tom Lannigan. "There's the steamer out there in the drink."

"Go back on her?" demanded Mart, scornfully.

Resolute Jack took one disgusted look at the fruit steamer that lay out in the bay and shook his head with decision.

"I'll never see the United States again, I'm afraid, if the steamer 'Hawksclaw' offers the only route back!"

They comprised all of the passenger list and the whole of the cargo that the tramp fruit steamer had dumped upon the beach of this sleepy little port of Truxillo, on the Atlantic coast of Honduras, one of the five republics of Central America.

This disgusted human cargo consisted of three items. Item One.—Jack Perry, seventeen, rather tall, athletic, wide awake, resolute, quick to make up his mind, unable to go back on a friend.

Item Two.—Mart Stanley, also seventeen, slow, inclined

to be lazy, but capable of being waked up. A dreamer, with active moments sometimes. A boy who had done a little of everything in a country town, including telegraphing, drug-clerking and printing.

Item Three.—Tom Lannigan, as Irish as his name, sixteen; good for anything he put his mind to, but with a mania for machinery. Fond of a fight, and likely to fall in love often.

Jack was decidedly the best educated of the three. He was an orphan, supported by an uncle, a rascally lawyer.

He had been at a military boarding school, but had quarreled with his uncle when he learned that the latter wanted to make a lawyer of him and take him into his own office to help in the uncle's dirty work.

Jack had sold a few belongings, realizing enough money to pay his fare to New York.

There, soon "strapped," and unable to find anything quickly to do, he had stowed away on the Hawksclaw.

Mart had a mother, but had been driven to run away from home by the brutality of his stepfather.

Mart's reading had made him believe that Honduras was just the sort of a place where he wanted to live and die.

In this beautiful tropical country there would be enough of fruit and other good things to eat, without any need to work for them.

Mart wasn't worthless, by a good deal, but he had his own queer notions about working hard that other people might make money out of him.

Tom Lannigan had been an orphan since the age of

five. He had been at a State institution, where he had received some schooling.

Then Tom drifted into the machine shop of the institution. Here he was perfectly happy until a change in superintendents, followed by two undeserved whippings, drove the spirited lad to run away.

All three of the youngsters had stowed away on the Hawksclaw.

Not one of them had known the others until, found in the hold by a sharp-eyed mate, they had been dragged on deck.

There had been nothing to do for it but to work their passage.

Jack had been forced to wait on the captain's table. The cook got Mart for a slave, and Tom was driven down below to learn to stoke.

Life on that ship, with an ugly captain and bad-tempered officers under him, had been infernal.

This morning, as the Hawsclaw lay in the harbor at Truxillo, the youngsters, with Jack for a spokesman, had demanded to be set ashore.

The captain had refused their demand. Then Jack threatened to appeal to the American consul, who happened to be aboard.

Thereupon the three boys had been rowed to the beach and dumped on the hot sand, under the tropical sun.

Jack had had a few dollars in cash, but that had been stolen from him on the ship.

So had his clothing. He wore now a seedy excuse for a suit that was much too large to fit.

Mart and Tom, not having had any clothes to brag of, had not been robbed.

And here they were, ragged, penniless, hungry, in a country where it is summer all the year around.

Though the three had had but little chance to talk together on the ship, the other two already looked naturally to Jack as their leader.

At some distance from the shore ran the main street of the little port, with its few stores and its few other buildings all facing the sea.

From this main street there were two short streets turning off.

Right in the center of the main street was a square, called, in Spanish-speaking countries, a plaza. On one side was a big and very old church.

On the opposite side of the plaza was a roomy, dingy-looking old building, on the shore side of which was a sign reading, "Hotel Oriente."

In the center of the plaza was a band-stand.

There were a few seats under the shade of the many tropical trees growing in the plaza.

Further back from the main part of the town appeared little groups of thatched houses and huts.

Just now, over the whole of Truxillo was the quiet of the hot mid-day. Few of the natives were in sight—not even at the big warehouses further along on the beach.

"Come on up to the plaza, anyway, and get in the shade," urged Jack, leading the way.

"I could eat something if I had it," suggested Tom, thoughtfully.

"I don't see all the fruit and cocoanuts laying around that I expected," sighed Mart.

"What are we going to do here, now that we're here?" questioned Tom.

"Want me to answer that for the crowd?" Jack asked.

"I do," Tom returned.

"Well, then," replied Jack Perry, making up his mind as quickly as usual, "we're going to stay here and grow up with the country. We're going to prosper, too."

"Prosper on what—in this sleepy place?" Tom demanded.

"That's just the point," Jack laughed. "It is a sleepy place, and yet there's wealth—loads of it—in this hot old country. While the natives are drowsing the day away, we're going to jump in and make the money."

"I don't blame the natives for being sleepy," grumbled Mart Stanley. "I could go to sleep right now if I wasn't so blamed hungry."

"If you speak of being hungry again," protested Tom, "I'll brain you on the spot!"

"Well, we are mighty hungry," smiled Jack. "But I suppose it's no use to talk about it."

"Shall we cross this park, square, plazzy, or whatever you call it, and register in the hotel?" demanded Tom, with irony.

"I've been thinking of that," Jack admitted.

"Oh, you have?"

"Yes; if I thought I could make a good enough bluff I'd try it in a minute, bye and bye, when I get hungrier still, I shall have to try it."

"Success to you!" muttered Tom, doubtfully. He had had some experience, back in New York, trying to get credit for meals.

"What's that guinny over there looking at us so sharp for?" demanded Mart, in an undertone.

He sat up, to stare back with interest at a man on the opposite side of the plaza, who, standing under one of the spreading trees, was certainly taking in every visible fact about the three young American boys.

He was a short, pleasant-faced fellow, under thirty. He was dark as any Spaniard, this stranger, but in his spotless white clothes, his white canvas shoes and his neat, high straw hat, he had the look of a gentleman.

"See here, Mart," warned Jack, in an undertone, "you've got to quit going around here calling people guinnies. They won't like it, and it's their country and we're strangers here."

"Well, what's the mug staring at us so for?" Mart insisted. "Didn't he ever see an American before?"

"I don't know," Jack answered. "But he looks like a pleasant enough fellow, and I'm going over to speak to him. Perhaps he'd like to have some Americans work for him at something."

"Glory! I hope it's machinery, then," cried Tom.

Mart sniffed, but Jack rose to make his way over to the smiling stranger in white. He was spared the trouble, however, for the stranger was even now crossing the plaza.

He came straight up to the three, but looked at Jack.

"You are the Americans?" asked the stranger.

"Yes," Jack agreed, promptly.

"I have been looking for you," continued the man in white, using English in which there was but a slight accent.

"Oh, you have?" asked Jack, opening his eyes very wide. But he had the good sense not to say more.

"Yes, yes!" went on the stranger, quickly. "I was afraid that I would be late, but I did not know, until an hour ago, that the Hawksclaw was in. Then I dressed and hurried down."

"Well," admitted Jack, fencing in the dark, "I must admit that I'm mighty glad to see you."

"You knew I would not disappoint you, then," went on the stranger, pleasantly. "But pardon. I forgot that you do not know my name. I am Senor Don Pablo Gomez."

"I'm more glad than I can tell you, Mr. Gomez, to have the pleasure of meeting you so promptly," uttered Jack, holding out his hand. "Permit me to introduce Mr. Lannigan and Mr. Stanley."

Senor Don Pablo Gomez bent over very low as he grasped hands with the boys.

"But pardon!" cried Senor Gomez. "You are not smoking, and I have not another eigar left. Wait! I will get some at once."

"But we don't——" began wonder-eyed Mart, butting in. Jack trod savagely on his toes.

"Ouch!" yelled Mart, bending over.

But Senor Don Pablo Gomez, without having waited to hear what Mart might have to say, had hurried off across the plaza to a small tobacco shop.

"Shut up and don't butt in," ground out Jack, fiercely. "Don't you see we're up against something, and don't know what it is. But it looks like luck. Plainly enough, this good-natured chap Gomez expected some one else on the steamer. That some one didn't come. We did, and if there's any decent job of any kind lying around, we're in for it. That's all! Now, shut up until I find out what the lay is. Then we'll see whether it's anything we want."

"But I want to know—" began Mart, protestingly.

"So do I," snapped up Jack. "And I'm going to find out. But I can't if you go to making Gomez think that we're not only the wrong parties but a pack of fools to boot."

"That's what!" muttered Tom Lannigan.

"I don't smoke, anyway," insisted Mart.

"Please yourself about that, and please me by keeping your mouth shut until we find where we're at. Now you understand, old fellow, that I don't want to be rough on you," Jack added, with his friendly smile. "But I don't want you to spoil anything good, Mart."

"Now do me the great favor to smoke, gentlemen," begged Gomez, reaching them with a big package of cigars.

Jack took one, so did Tom, but Mart bowed, murmur-

"Thank you. Not until after I have eaten."

"Oh, how stupid I am! Pardon!" cried Senor Gomez. "We will go at once to the hotel and order lunch."

Lunch! Now he was talking something the boys could understand!

Yet in the next instant this man of Honduras glanced over the boys' attire with some uneasiness.

"If you will not take offence, I would suggest that perhaps it would be as well, first, to go and get some of the kind of clothes that we wear here."

"No offence at all," Jack answered, flushing. "Only—only—well, our draft for funds hasn't got through yet."

"What of that?" cried Gomez, though in a very low tone. "Am I not privileged to supply everything—even funds?"

"I begin to like Senor Don Pablo Gomez more and more every minute," laughed Jack, inwardly.

Their generous friend led them into a side street. Further, he took them into a small but heavily stocked clothing store.

It took the better part of an hour, but at the end of that time several things had happened.

Each boy was the possessor of half a dozen white suits, a black frock coat for the evening, an array of thin, tropical underwear and silk socks, shoes, hats, etc.

More than that, trunks had been bought for each youngster, and barefooted, scantily clothed, dark-skinned native porters had been summoned to take the trunks around to the hotel.

As the deal went on the curiosity of the American boys as to what it all could mean grew greater and greater.

"Pardon, but you keep the senor proprietor talking," whispered Gomez to Tom, who instantly "dropped."

Then, under pretence of taking Jack back into the store to show him some goods, Gomez whispered to our hero:

"Sonor Perry of course you will have to open a healt

"Senor Perry, of course you will have to open a bank account."

"I suppose so," Jack admitted, blankly.

"Of course it might excite suspicion if you were to deposit Honduran money when you have been such a short time in the country. So I have the American money here."

Jack felt a fat wad of bills being stuffed into his willing hand, under cover of a counter.

"How much?" our hero whispered.

"One thousand dollars."

"A thousand!"

Jack Perry felt almost dizzy.

"It is not much, but it will do to start," apologized Gomez. "Exchanged into our currency, you know, it will make more than twice a thousand dollars."

There was not even a flicker of Jack's eyebrows now. Stuffing the money slyly into one of his new trousers pockets, he replied:

"It is highly satisfactory, I assure you, Senor Gomez." And indeed it was!

Things had begun to hum in the last hour!

"Now, we will go to the bank," murmured Gomez. "You

"Of course I'll save a little of it out for expenses," Jack hinted.

"That will not be at all necessary, senor. You will permit me to hand you each a sufficient sum in Honduran money when we are enjoying our privacy at the hotel."

"Say, but I'm going to like this fellow, Gomez, before I get through with him!" Perry throbbed, inwardly, as they joined the other two young Americans at the front of the store.

"Oh!" suddenly exclaimed Gomez, "you mentioned some time ago that you would like to go to the bank."

"Sure!" grinned Mart. "We-"

But Jack Perry seemed to trip on something. He stumbled, ending his mishap quickly in a sharp kick against one of Mart's shins.

CHAPTER II.

ANITA'S DARK EYES MAKE UP JACK'S MIND.

"This is truly a miserable hotel," apologized Gomez, as the boys were finishing their meal.

"It's all right from the roof up," Tom declared, agreeably.

They had had their meal, anyway, and enough to eat, even if not of the best.

The meat was tough, the bread poor, the vegetables watery. It was a meal that would have raised a riot in a New York hotel, but here this was the best and only hotel in the place.

Perry and his friends had engaged rooms at the hotel. This was their sitting-room, a great, bare place with a few chairs and a couple of tables.

The windows, opening down to the floor, opened out on a balcony that looked out over the plaza.

The luncheon had been served in this room, the table being close to one of the big windows.

And now the "mozo" (waiter) had been dismissed, and Senor Gomez had taken the further care to lock the door.

"I have been studying you carefully," admitted Gomez, as he came back to a seat and leaned forward over the table.

"I suppose you have," Jack admitted, drily.

"Really, I thought Senor Carson would send us older men from New York. And I thought he would send the six men that I asked for."

"Are you disappointed?" questioned Jack.

"That you are not six instead of only three—yes," assented Gomez.

"But our youthfulness will not disappoint you too much."

"Oh, I dare say you are old enough for the work. I hardly doubt that you are clever enough. But I will inquire, now, what the specialty of each is?"

"The speciality?" Jack Perry repeated, his mind in a bit

of a fog.

"Yes, Senor Perry, your calling—that which you do best of all."

"Oh," replied Perry, easily. "Now I understand. It is soon explained. My friend Stanley is a telegraph and electrical expert, and also a chemist."

Mart opened his mouth quickly, but Jack trod on his foot under the table.

"And Senor Lannigan?" inquired Gomez, with interest.

"He's a mechanical engineer, and a good one," said Jack, unblushingly.

"No military men among you?" questioned Gomez, in a sharp whisper.

"Certainly," came the ready, smiling answer from Jack Perry. "That's my specialty."

"But have you been a military officer in your country—have you been used to drilling and handling soldiers?" queried Gomez.

"That's been my regular business," Jack admitted, without a blush or a wink.

"What rank did you hold in your country, Senor Perry?"
"I was a captain," Perry replied, off-handedly.

Nor had he told any lie. He had been captain of one of

the two companies at boarding-school.

"And your friends—they have had military experience?"
persisted the Honduran.

"Lots of it," Jack returned, without the twitching of an evelid.

Inside, he resolved to turn Mart and Tom in an awkward squad the first minutes they three were alone together.

"It's very odd that Carson didn't write me," mused Gomez.

"And I'm thundering glad he didn't write," thought Jack, uneasily.

"You are sure your courage will hold out?" asked Gomez, thoughtfully.

"See here, senor," retorted Jack, "when you find anything that we turn pale over you make a note of it."

Mart looked as if he would soon have to open his mouth, seeing which our hero got the toe of one boot tightly against that annoying Stanley's nearer shin.

"Now, I think," Jack went on, in a low voice, while his two friends watched him closely, "that it is time for me to ask a few questions."

"What did Senor Carson tell you in New York?" demanded Gomez, quickly.

"I'm not going to discuss that now, Senor Gomez. I don't want part of the story as he has told me and part as you have told me. The two parts would clash, and be sure to get us mixed up. So you will excuse my saying that we can't go any further in this matter until we have heard the whole thing over again from yourself. Then there won't be any misunderstandings at any point. I'll give you the floor now, Senor Gomez, and my whole attention."

It was a bold stroke, but Jack played it well.

Having spoken, and as firmly as he could, he leaned back in his chair, studying the dark face of the Honduran.

"What do you know about our country?" demanded Senor Gomez.

"Nothing," Jack admitted, honestly.

"Then, first, I will tell you something about Honduras. It is quite a large country—as large as any of the five in Central America. We have some forty thousand square miles of territory, but our population is only about four hundred thousand people. Of these, only about ten thousand are white. The rest are Indians."

"Indians!" gasped Mart, and got a prompt, though secret kick in the shin.

"They are peaceable enough, aren't they?" asked Jack.
"Peaceable? Oh, yes, though under white men whom
they trust, Senor Perry, our Indians will fight fairly well.

"Now, to continue: There are many parts of Honduras where civilized men have rarely trodden. But with the country between here and Tegucigalpa, we shall have little trouble. There is much forest, but there are good roads through, and little villages here and there."

"What about the railroad?" Tom could not help asking.

"Railroad?" smiled Senor Gomez. "There is none between here and Tegucigalpa, which is the capital of the country."

"Then we walk when we go?" persisted Tom.

"You might, but there will be horses and mules."

"We're getting off the main story," broke in Jack, impatiently. "Senor Gomez, will you go on with the story of just what is expected of us?"

"Of course you know that I am acting in the interest of Senor Don Sebastian Lopez?"

"I guessed it," lied Jack, without a quiver. "Go on."

"You young gentlemen will travel through the country, pretending that you are in search of some good investments. You can mention any kind of investments you please. You will hardly attract any suspicion if you are careful not to be over-friendly with myself or Senor Lopez. Of course you will have to pretend to have business with us. Perhaps you can be a trifle friendly with us at first, but bye and bye you need not hesitate to abuse us when others are about. You might abuse Senor Lopez in particular, since you are spending his money and acting in his interest."

"I'll call him a thief!" Jack smilingly promised.

"Oh, no, no, no! Not that, senor! For then our good friend Lopez would be obliged to kill you. But talk to him as if you felt that he was trying to overcharge you in business operations. You understand?"

"I do," Jack nodded. "And now, while we are travelling about the country——?"

"You will follow the orders that you will receive from me. If I send you orders by another, he will bring you this ring, as a proof of his authority."

Gomez took a strangely engraved seal ring from one of his fingers, passing it over for our hero's inspection.

"And these orders—?" followed up Perry.

"Why, in general, you will be as much among the Indians as you can. You will try to make friends of them, so that they will believe in you and look to you later on."

"If they don't scalp us," broke in Mart, anxiously.

He got another kick, while Gomez looked at him, inquiringly.

"Friend Stanley is a good deal of a joker," Jack broke in, blithely. "Don't mind him, senor, but give me the pointers."

"You may, perhaps," continued the Honduran, "have two months to spend among the Indians before you begin to enlist them."

"Enl—" Mart started, but he got another kick that drove him into sulky silence.

"And then how much time will be allowed for drilling the Indians?" Jack queried, bearing in mind the questions that had been asked about his military experience.

"Four or five days, perhaps," replied Gomez.

"Great guns, man, that wouldn't be long enough!" Perry protested.

"Perhaps a whole week, then," Gomez answered, carelessly. "Later on we can talk about that."

"Yes; I want something else understood more particularly right now," Jack insisted. "Tell me, briefly, just the motive of the whole thing."

"The motive?" demanded Gomez, eyeing our hero keenly. "Then, I fear, Senor Carson did not tell you as much as I had thought."

"I'm afraid he didn't," Jack retorted. "You can mend all that now. Go ahead. We're listening."

"Why, surely, you know what a tyrant President Roquero is? How he has destroyed true liberty in Honduras?"

"I've heard something about it," our hero admitted, though he hadn't.

"Honduras has not been a divilized nation since Roquero took the Presidency!" cried Gomez, passionately. "Yet in a few months the election will take place and the tyrant will be elected for another six years."

"If the people don't want him?" blurted Mart, before our hero could check him.

"The people?" retorted Gomez, snapping his fingers.
"Bah! The people do not count under such a tyrant as
President Roquero. No matter what ballots are cast, Roquero's officials will see that he is returned elected."

"And so you want us to—" Jack began. He paused, looking meaningly at Gomez.

"Why, Senor Perry, it is simple. If you help us to enlist the Indians, while I enroll all the faithful among our whites, and if you help us vigorously enough to drill the new troops, Roquero, the tyrant, will be overthrown and driven out of the country by our revolution—"

"Revolution?" Mart Stanley gasped, hoarsely.

"Revolution?" Tom Lannigan repeated, his eyes gleaming.

"Revolution?" Jack realized, at last.

"You seem almost surprised?" smiled Senor Gomez, darkly. "I much fear that Senor Carson did not tell you this much."

"He certainly didn't," Jack throbbed.

"That is why we wanted an American military officer of experience," Gomez explained. "All the soldiers in this country now are on the side of the government."

"And what you really want is for us to help raise and

train a mob of thick-skulled Indians to fight soldiers?" Jack Perry almost hissed.

"Well, why not? Are you going to back out?" demanded Senor Don Pablo Gomez, turning several shades paler as he rose to his feet.

"Wait a moment," Jack interposed. "We want a second or two to think this matter over."

Gomez, looking utterly bewildered and alarmed, allowed Jack to go past him to another window, where our hero stood looking out across the plaza.

Mart wanted badly to talk, but Tom Lannigan, sitting beside Stanley, gripped him under the table.

"Wants us to train a mob of Indians into an army and overthrow the government!" throbbed Perry, as he gazed out into the sunlit plaza. "Good Lord, what a job for a boy just out of boarding-school!"

As he stood there a carriage rolled slowly by. On the box sat an Indian driver and an Indian footman. Behind the carriage, on a horse, rode a servant who looked like a Spaniard.

In the carriage sat a stout, elderly woman at whom our hero did not look a second time.

But beside her sat a girl, the very sight of whom caused Jack Perry to start and flush.

A girl of perhaps sixteen, but ripe in all the womanly fulness and beauty that comes to girls of that age in tropical countries.

Her features were perfect, her skin tinted a pale shade of olive. Her hair, black as midnight, looked a crown of beauty.

But it was her eyes, her full, red lips, her teeth of pearliest white that chained Jack's attention most of all as she turned, in the midst of a rippling laugh and glanced upward at the window.

"Those eyes! They chained Jack Perry, then and there. He felt hot and cold by turns as the magic of those splendid black eyes went through him.

He had never seen anything as beautiful in girlhood before as this splendid young creature in the purest, simplest white.

As quickly as the girl's eyes met the glance of the ardent young American at the window, the girl colored deliciously and glanced swiftly down at her lap.

Almost instantly, though, she raised her eyes once more to Jack's, her color deepening—and then the carriage was so far past that she could not have looked again without turning her head around.

"Ah!" murmured Gomez, as he stepped beside our hero.

Jack choked down, by a mighty effort of his resolute will,
all that was surging within him.

"Quite a charming girl that in the carriage," he remarked, coolly.

"You may well say so," returned Gomez, his eyes glittering. "She is Anita, the only daughter of Senor Don Sebastian Lopez, our superb and patriotic leader. But, Senor Perry, you are hesitating, where I had expected Senor Carson to send us some one prepared to understand our task. Why do you hesitate? Do you refuse to go further?"

"Refuse?" cried Jack. "Not a bit of it, senor! But we Americans always take a minute to think over anything."

"When you decide-"

"I have decided already," spoke Jack Perry, swiftly. "For myself, I am ready. I am at your orders."

The Honduran grasped our hero's hand, pressing it joyously.

"Of course you wouldn't leave me out," burst in Tom Lannigan. "An Irishman can't let a fight go by."

"And as for me-" said Mart, half dubiously.

"Why, you join us, of course," Jack laughed, but he spoke in such a way as to shut off further talk.

"Then it is settled!" cried Gomez, delightedly.

"It will be to-night, perhaps," Jack returned, meaningly.

"Why, what do you mean, senor?"

"I must first be sure that Senor Lopez is satisfied with us."

"He is sure to be!"

"But I must see him—to-night—must know that he will trust the task to us. Until I have seen our chief, Senor Gomez, I will not promise further."

"So be it, then," agreed Gomez. "This evening we will call upon Senor Lopez."

"That's my point carried," Jack clicked, inwardly. "I shall have a chance to see Anita."

And then, as our hero remembered the dark flush on Gomez's cheek at sight of the girl, Perry added to himself:

"Unless I'm more stupid than I think I am, then you are in love with Anita, my dear Gomez!"

CHAPTER III.

THE DEED OF BLOOD.

"This is the kind of a place in the tropics that I've been dreaming about," confided Mart Stanley to Tom.

"Sure, it's pleasant dreams you've been having, then," Lannigan replied, with relish, as he looked about over the beautiful scene.

They were out at the residence of Senor Sebastian Lopez.

Just after dark Gomez had called at the hotel for the poys.

Then, in a victoria, they had driven over two miles of beautiful, palm-lined avenue.

The Lopez house, of white marble, was large and imposing. It stood well back from the road, near the center of some hundred acres of land.

All about the house were beautiful lawns, studded here and there with beds of beautiful tropical flowers or shrubs.

Not far from the great main entrance to the house a fountain played.

The great house itself consisted of four wings, arranged in the form of a square, with a great open court in the center, and here another fountain sent up sprays that fell in a marble basin. It was here that the first guests of the evening had been received.

But the heat of the evening had driven them out onto the lawns beyond the house.

Here many torches flamed, but were not needed, for the moon had risen fully over the luxuriant scene.

Here, on the lawn to-night, a military band played, for Colonel Banda, the military commandante of Truxillo, was among the guests. He had sent his band before him.

There were about thirty guests in all.

Down near the entrance to the grounds two soldier orderlies lounged close to where their horses had been lariated. They were to escort the commandante's carriage back to town.

Outside, at the edge of the road, waited another mounted detail of a lieutenant and six men who were to escort the carriage of Senor Macate, governor of the province.

"Glory be! McCarty?" ejaculated Tom Lannigan. "The saints be praised that there's one honest official down in this queer old country."

"The name is pronounced like McCarty, but it's spelled M-a-c-a-t-e," Jack explained, with a smile.

"What do I care how it's spelled?" retorted Tom. "It's called McCarty, all right—and hasn't the old fellow got red hair? That settles him. He's Irish, if you go far enough back, even if he don't know it himself."

Senor Sebastian Lopez, who aspired to be the next president of Honduras, was a white-haired and white-moustached man of nearly sixty—short, thin, nervous and wiry, but fine-looking withal.

His manner was so courteous as to be almost lordly.

It was Gomez who introduced the young men.

"And now I shall present you, senores, to my daughter," proposed Senor Lopez, at which Jack's pulse began to throb twice as rapidly.

But the presentation was made, first of all, to the elderly woman whom Jack had seen with the girl.

Tia Teresa she was called, which meant "Aunt Theresa." Even before he had been presented to the girl, Perry let one glance wander to her face.

She met his glance, and flushed slightly.

Then came the presentation to Anita herself.

She looked full at Jack, now, with her dark, glorious eyes—and he was her slave!

"And now a word with you, my dear Senor Perry," murmured Lopez, drawing his arm through Jack's.

He led the youngster away, across the lawn, Mart and Tom being left to chat with the girl and her aunt.

"Senor Gomez tells me that you must be sure of my approval," whispered the old man, as they strolled along, out of earshot. "You are young, very young, you-three, Senor Perry, but I am satisfied. You begin life young in your great country—I know that—so your age will be no bar to your splendid service. Senor Gomez will give you your instructions, or will send them to you when necessary."

"You are sure that I will not fail you?" Jack quizzed.

"You are a military man, Captain Perry, and that is what I wanted—a military officer from your great country."

For just one instant Jack was tempted to tell this fine old man that he had never been captain of anything greater than a company at a military boarding-school.

"But what would be the result?" Jack asked himself. "I'd get the twenty-three for being an impostor, then. No job—no chance to see Anita!"

So he held his peace, but as soon as he could made his way back to where the girl sat.

She was surrounded by half a dozen admirers now, among them Colonel Banda, who sighed every time that he looked at the girl.

"He's clean gone!" grunted Jack. "Rats! He's old enough to be Anita's father!"

Pablo Gomez was also in the group around the girl. He was quiet, self-contained, but he flushed every time that the girl addressed him.

"Mighty little show to see a girl in this country!" grumbled Jack, as he glanced, with a look of secret hate, at "Tia Teresa."

It is the custom, in Spanish-speaking countries, for a girl of good family to be always accompanied by an elderly woman, who sees to it that the young lady does not have a chance to be alone with her admirers.

Yet Jack hung on in the little group, fussing, yet wonderfully pleased whenever Anita addressed a few words to him in her sweet, shy way. Anita Lopez had been three years at school in England, and spoke English.

Jack knew a little Spanish, for that matter. He had studied it at school.

"I wonder if these girls in Honduras never get a show to be alone with a fellow?" grumbled Jack.

Looking around, he saw Gomez make a sign to him.

Then Gomez walked away. Jack, slowly strolling, met Gomez further down the lawn.

"Do not be too much about the Senorita Anita," whispered Gomez. "Banda will see and will be jealous, angry."

"Is he engaged to her?" Jack demanded.

"No," replied Gomez, flushing still again. "But Banda is very much in love with the senorita. If he takes a dislike to you, then I am very much afraid that he will send for Vasquez, and——"

"Who?"

"Vasquez. I forgot, senor, that you are not acquainted here as yet. Vasquez was once a bandit. Even now he is no better. But he is now under the protection of the governor and the commandante. He is a wicked rascal who does their dirty or deadly work for them. He is a bad man, this Vasquez, and cannot be punished for anything he does, since both the governor and the commandante are his friends."

"But what have I got to do with Vasquez?" Jack demanded.

"You will have much to do," warned Gomez, "if you incur Banda's dislike. He might order Vasquez to make 'way with you."

"Oh!" nodded Jack, understandingly.

Gomez, however, had taken the worst possible way to keep our hero out of danger.

If there was peril in being attentive to Anita, then Jack Perry was just the lad to throw himself into that danger when he was as fascinated by a girl as he now was by Anita Lopez.

Within fifteen minutes nervy Jack found a chance to seat himself beside the girl.

"You have never been in the United States?" he asked, in English.

"No; but in England," the girl replied, looking full into his eyes.

They talked on in English, which Banda could not understand.

Chewing his moustache savagely, the commandante glared at the presumptuous young American.

Yet Jack held the fort for more than ten minutes, until, at a word from Tia Teresa, the girl followed her aunt into the house for a few moments.

"My dear boy," whispered Senor Lopez, "you have offended Senor Banda, I fear. It will not do, just yet, to make him our enemy. If he suspects anything he can clap us all into jail. Then—well, with the governor's help, we might all have to kneel before a firing squad! Do you understand?"

"Quite," Jack nodded.

To our hero's surprise, as Lopez left him, Colonel Banda was quickly at Perry's side.

"Senor," he asked, meaningly, in Spanish, "do you believe in taking good advice?"

"Always, if it really is good," Jack returned, instantly.

"Then, Senor Americano, I have some to offer now."

"I am listening, Senor Commandante."

"These are times of unrest in our politics, senor. We are uncertain and very suspicious of strangers. Do you understand?"

"Not quite," Jack answered, slowly, though he felt a swift thrill of alarm.

Had the commandante gotten wind of the revolution that was being plotted?

"I am advising you to leave this country, Senor Perry. The fruit steamer is still in the harbor. It leaves in the morning. Go aboard to-night and secure your passage. Your friends with you."

"What?" demanded Jack, his eyes flashing.

"If you stay here, then, as commandante, I cannot be responsible for your safety, senor!"

"Thank you," jeered Jack, coldly. "Then I'll be responsible for it myself."

"Are you defying me, senor?" demanded the commandante, swiftly.

"Are you threatening me?" Perry came back at him.

The two stood there, facing each other, eyes flashing and breath coming rather short.

"We understand each other," said the commandante, softly, but with a snake-like, deadly smile.

"Good night, Senor Commandante," Jack retorted. He turned on his heel, walking away.

But wary old Senor Don Lopez had seen the meeting and

suspected. He found an excuse for leading our hero into the house, and questioned him.

"This will be a sad blow to our plans," faltered the old man. "You will have to leave Truxillo. We must try to get you safe somewhere in the interior of the country. If you are here later than to-morrow you will fall afoul of the knife of Vasquez. We must find some way to get you safely off."

"I don't like to run when a scoundrel makes faces at me," Jack retorted, with a flash of sullen pride.

The evening's pleasure was soon over.

Senor Gomez took the boys back to the hotel in his carriage.

"I shall see you in the forenoon, or send some one. Remember this ring," he whispered to our hero, at parting.

Mart and Tom pulled their cots into Jack's room and were soon asleep. But Jack did not even try to undress.

The queer events of the day—their sudden prosperity, their new, strange, secret mission, the revolution, Anita—and most of all, Anita!

It was impossible to sleep. Jack looked down into the plaza. It was still lighted. Several people were still astir, enjoying outdoors the cool of the late evening.

"I'll run down for half an hour," Jack muttered.

He was quickly in the plaza, strolling slowly before the hotel entrance.

At length he neared the corner.

Here the street was all but deserted.

Just as he reached the corner, however, a bare-footed native, hurrying around the corner, ran plumply and heavily against him, then recoiled.

"Can't you look where you're going?" Perry demanded, in Spanish.

"Carramba! You dog of an Americano!" growled the fellow, sullenly. "You scum of a gringo! You dare to talk thus to a citizen of this republic!"

"Oh, give us a rest!" Jack growled, falling back into English.

With an angry snarl, the fellow hurled himself at Perry. Blink! Jack's ready, strong fist landed between the fellow's eyes, felling him to the sidewalk.

"El perro Americano!" (the American dog!) howled the fallen one.

In an instant there was a rush. More than a dozen men surrounded the American boy.

Jack fought back in good earnest, but, just as he sent another to earth, a scoundrel behind drew a knife and plunged it full into the American boy's back!

CHAPTER IV.

COMMANDANTE BANDA GETS IN HIS WORK.

Clang!

It was a sound as if steel had met steel. Swift as a flash Jack wheeled around. The fellow with the knife had drawn back, for the point of his steel had struck against a thin sheet of steel, safely fastened under our hero's shirt.

"You would, would you?" raged Jack.

Every last bit of his fighting blood was to the surface now.

The pride of the American blood was in it, too.

He would show these miserable halfbreeds that he could not be downed by any crew like theirs.

By a boxing trick that he had learned at school, Jack Perry dodged in under the fellow's arm ere the latter could use his knife again.

Wrench! Seizing the halfbreed around the body, Perry raised him over his head..

Crash! To the tune of half a score of cries of horror, Jack pitched his victim headforemost through the glass of the drug store window, wrecking something like a hundred bottles inside as the body of the astounded wretch fell there.

Now Jack wheeled, darting back. But the gang followed. Whizz! Perry whirled around, catching and raising aloft the foremost of his pursuers.

Crack! Jack swung the fellow, then brought him downward, the fellow's heels landing on the head of another assailant.

Flop! Perry tossed his victim out into the gutter, then backed against the building, his fists up and ready for work.

But the crowd had had enough of this terrible Americano, who did not hesitate to fight a dozen at once.

They stood back, just out of reach, shouting savage things in Spanish and in some Indian dialect.

"All talk and no fight!" uttered Jack, contemptuously.
"Great Scott!"

This latter cry of real alarm was caused by the sudden appearance of four Honduran soldiers, armed with rifles and bayonets, and led by a sergeant.

These soldiers came up on the run, egged on by the yells of the native crowd.

"Now I'm in for it!" quivered the boy.

He had the good sense to know that it would be worse than foolish to resist the soldiers.

If he attempted to resist, these Central American soldiers would cheerfully enough shoot him down like a dog.

"You will at once submit to the majesty of the law of the Republic of Honduras!" challenged the sergeant, pompously.

"Willingly," Jack answered, in Spanish, and with an effort to seem cooler about it than he really felt. "But first allow me, sergeant, to speak to my friends in the hotel."

"No! No insolence from you, you American dog!" growled the sergeant. "Along with him, men!"

The soldiers formed the four corners of a square, with Jack Perry in the center.

Behind them marched the sergeant, followed by the rabble, now grown to half a hundred.

"Well, this is a pickle!" faltered the boy.

Then a new alarm came to him.

"Confound it, these scoundrels belong to that chesty wretch, Banda! I sure am in for it, if I don't keep my head!"

So never did prisoner go along more obediently than did Jack Perry, escorted by these ragamuffin, bare-footed soldiers, in their tattered blue uniforms that looked like bedticking.

Well out of the town, a quarter of a mile away, they came to the jail, a great square, gloomy-looking place of stone and adobe mud.

There were two soldiers on guard at the gate as Jack and his escort marched in under.

Just beyond the gate was a desk, out of doors, and here the sergeant halted his prisoner.

After much calling a sleepy-looking lieutenant of the Honduran army, a boy no older than Jack, bare-footed and yawning, his blouse unbuttoned and his hair tousled, slid out through a door and dropped into the chair behind the desk.

Yawning, the lieutenant listened to the sergeant's excited charge.

Three or four of the rabble outside were admitted. They told their stories in loud, angry voices, with much waving of their arms.

"Now, can I say a word?" demanded Jack, after five minutes, during which he had heard himself accused of about every crime on the list.

"Speak!" yawned the lieutenant.

"Will you allow me to send to the hotel for my friends?"
"We will send for them if we want them," smiled the

young officer, meaningly.

That look, and the tone, gave Jack a chill.

"Thunderation!" he gasped to himself. "Do these rascals mean to pull in Mart and Tom, too?"

"Have you anything more to say?" asked the lieutenant.

"Not until I have seen the American consul," Jack replied.

At every foreign port in the world there is an American consul, one of whose duties, in the name of the government at Washington, is to look after Americans who get into trouble at the port at which he is stationed.

"The American consul is a very busy man," grinned the lieutenant. "You may not be able to see him as soon as you would like!"

Another threat. Jack shivered.

He had read, before this, that in Central American countries, the American consul is often kept in ignorance of the fact that an American citizen has been arrested.

"Throw the dog into the courtyard!" ordered the lieutenant, briefly.

Jack soon got an inkling of what that order meant.

Jab! The point of a bayonet pierced him in his left thigh.

Jumping with rage, Jack turned on the grinning soldier. But he got another jab from another bayonet.

All four were now prodding him, with intense enjoyment.

"They're trying to goad me on to desperation!" flashed through the boy's mind. "Then they can finish me up!"

The thought cooled him down. Ahead he saw another iron gateway, leading to an inner courtyard.

Through this gateway dashed Jack, chased by the little brown soldiers.

But they halted at the gate, the sergeant pulling it shut with a clang, and locking it.

The sergeant and his squad vanished. The sleepy lieutenant must have gone back to his bed.

As Jack stood there on the stone pavement of the bare, damp courtyard, the only living being he could see was a sentry pacing up on the wall to the east of him.

"He keeps me in sight every minute of the time," throbbed the boy. "No chance to get away from here. A bullet would sure be mine if I tried."

Yet Jack glanced around, half hoping to espy a stone big enough to take a try at the sentry with, if the chance came.

But no such missile appeared.

"Might as well sit down and take things easy," reflected the American youngster, gloomily. "Lord, I hope they don't get Tom and Mart, anyway. It would be tough luck to land my friends in jail with me."

He sat down on the stone courtyard, his back against a wall—but not the wall on the top of which the alert, evil-eved sentinel trod.

"That steel plate presses rather hard against my back," muttered Jack. "It was mighty thoughtful of Senor Lopez to call me in and insist on my putting the steel plate between my shoulders, though. If it hadn't been for that, a Honduran dagger would have been sticking in me now."

At every sound Perry started, dreading to see Tom and Mart come marching in under guard.

"No news is good news," sighed the young prisoner. "If Mart and Tom don't arrive, it shows that they haven't been caught or else that the authorities don't want them. But gracious!"

Jack Perry, stung by a sudden thought, leaped to his feet so nimbly that the sentry upon the wall above swiftly covered the boy with his rifle, shouting:

"Para!" (Stop!)

"Oh, that's all right, old chap," Jack called back, reassuringly, as he sank back to his seat on the stone flags.

But the thought that had stung our hero was:

"It may be that Banda is getting in his fine work so thoroughly that he has ordered his soldiers to kill Tom and Mart, under the pretence that they resisted arrest. I've heard of such things being done in these fearful Central American countries!"

From then on Jack Perry throbbed with misery.

The old cathedral bell back in the plaza struck twelve times.

Wakeful Jack counted, then sighed.

In another instant, though, he started.

For some one was nearing the iron gate in the darkness. Then the gate was swung backward—and Commandante Banda entered.

CHAPTER V.

A THREAT AND A TRICK WORTH TWO OF ANY OTHER.

"So, my gringo!" laughed Colonel Banda, as he strode in and the iron gate clanged behind him.

"Gringo" is an insulting word that Spanish-speaking people apply to Americans or Englishmen.

Jack, though his heart was thumping, managed to stare coolly at the bold, swaggering commandante, who came in all the glory of full-dress uniform, with two or three cheap-looking medals pinned to his breast, with clattering saber hanging at his left belt and a huge revolver in a jaunty holster over his right hip.

"You speak Spanish well enough to understand me?" went on the commandante.

"Yes," Jack answered, in the same tongue.

"How do you like your new home?"

"That's impudent of you," gritted the boy.

"Then you do not like the high walls and the grim-looking sentry at this carcel?"

"Did you think I would?"

"I did not care," smiled Banda. "You have come down into this strange country and have begun by making yourself unpleasant to the chief military officer. In fact, you have made me hate you. Do you know what that means?"

"What?" Jack demanded, bluntly.

"It means that you will have to be tried in the morning. You have resisted the guard when it tried to arrest you——"

"That's a blamed lie, and you know it!"

"And you seriously wounded one of the soldiers, so that he has since died."

"That's another infernal lie, Banda, as you also know. I did not touch one of your dirty, ragged soldiers."

Banda shrugged his shoulders.

"At least, gringo, we can give one of our soldiers a vacation, and he can go away before daylight. The rest will swear that you killed him. The alcalde (judge) will believe me, and will sentence you to be shot, on the evidence."

"Shot!" quivered the American boy.

"Yes, most certainly."

"Then you'll hear a mighty long lecture from the United States government."

"Your government may ask questions," retorted Banda, shrugging his shoulders, and smiling wickedly, his eyes gleaming in the dark. "What of that? Our government replies that you were shot to death for murdering one of our soldiers. That is all right. It is quite according to the practice of governments everywhere to kill murderers. Your government can have nothing more to say."

"And a dozen of you fellows will perjure yourselves in order to murder me?" gasped Perry.

"Oh, that is nothing more than we have sometimes done before," Banda laughed, unconcernedly. "Gringo, do you understand how fully you are in my power?"

"Yes, I do," Jack answered, soberly.

"Then perhaps you will be willing to listen to me."

"Oho! So you have some proposal to make?"

"Yes."

"And if I agree I may succeed in getting off with my life?"

"Truly, gringo, you are clever at guessing!"

Jack Perry folded his arms, stood erect, looked piercingly into the commandante's eyes, and retorted:

"Talk away!"

"Senor," the commandante went on, in a tone that was intended to be more polite, but a tone that sounded only more oily, "the fruit steamer that brought you here is still in the harbor. She sails in the morning. I will order you released if you give me your word to go aboard and sail away from here. But do not think you can trick me. If you do not sail on that vessel, and keep away from here after this, it will be easy for me to get you in the carcel again and finish you. Bah! I can order you strangled here now, and your weighted body taken out to sea and dropped, and no one will ever question me."

"And you'd do a thing like that?" Jack demanded, steadily, as he tried to look through and through the Hon-

duran.

"Instantly, if it were necessary," jeered the commandante. "It would not be quite the first time that my enemy has disappeared!"

"And why am I your enemy?" Jack asked.

"You know the answer well enough, senor! You have the misfortune to love Anita Lopez!"

"Well," insisted Jack, too proud of his new sweetheart to deny the charge, "why shouldn't I love Senorita Lopez?"

"Because I love her!" hissed Banda.

"And that is reason enough for murdering me?"

"Quite!" snarled Banda.

Jack thought swiftly.

He wondered if he could spring upon Banda, force him over backwards, and get the rascal's revolver out of the holster.

There was the sentry, to be sure, but the sentry would not dare fire when there was danger of hitting his officer.

If Jack could spring upon Banda, get possession of that revolver, and shoot the Honduran full of holes before help arrived—that seemed the best thing to do.

"It won't save me, but it'll carry that murderous wretch into the next world with me!" thrilled the boy.

Banda, silent now, his eyes gleaming, stood with his back to the sentry.

Jack, as he faced his enemy, almost screamed.

For a thing had just happened, before his very eyes, that he simply could not believe at first.

Our hero, from where he stood, could see the sentry pacing along the top of the wall.

Even as Jack watched this sentry, our hero saw a rope securely tied. swish softly up from the ground outside. "Now, it's

A noose fell over the sentry's head, tightened instantly about his throat.

Jerk! Before the sentry could cry out or turn, he was us through the rest of the night."

twitched down from his high place, falling somewhere outside the jail wall.

Yet the falling of the body made no sound.

It was different, though, with the rifle, for that fell to the ground outside.

Clang!

At the sound, Banda turned, with a start.

And that start was a fearful blunder for him.

Like a flash, Jack Perry was upon his back, his fingers twined around the commandante's throat.

Banda struggled, but Jack held on with a death-grip.

It was no time to show mercy.

Banda had plotted to have our hero's life. Perry could show no more mercy than he expected.

For a moment the struggle was intense, but Jack held on. Then Banda, suffocating and growing black in the face, weakened, slipped down to the ground, and was still.

Like a flash, Jack Perry stripped off the rascal's belt, holster, revolver and cartridge box.

Straightened up, and buckling the belt around his own more slender waist, our hero stood listening.

Swish! Up over the wall came a rope, swirling. Down it fell, inside the enclosure.

With an inward cry of joy, Jack Perry grasped that rope—held fast!

There came a tug. He gave an answering pull.

Then, while he held on with all his might, he felt a series of steady tugs.

Some one coming, sure enough!

And there he was! Glory! Tom Lannigan!

Just one comprehending look the Irish lad shot down through the darkness, then swiftly slid down the rope into the enclosure.

"Jack, old boy, glory be!"

. The two grasped hands and hung on as if they had not met in years.

A stir in Banda's body brought them both back to their peril.

"Choke him, Tom, while I scare him with this gun!" thrilled Jack.

"Let him see the popul, and I'll do better—same as we did with the barefooted man-behind-the-gun outside," whispered Lannigan.

The Irish boy threw himself upon Banda, choking him in no gentle fashion, next cramming a couple of handker-chiefs into the commandante's mouth.

"You make a sound, Banda," warned Jack, also bending over the Honduran and pointing the muzzle straight at the commandante's eyes, "and we'll go into the next world with you after blowing your brains all over the pavement!"

Banda winced as he saw the light of deadly purpose in the American boy's eyes.

In a jiffy more, Lannigan had him not only gagged, but securely tied.

"Now, it's travelling we'll be, I'm thinking," quivered Fom.

"Yes, but grab that sword. Weapons may be useful to us through the rest of the night."

"Now, up with you!" cried Tom.

"Will the rope hold?"

"Sure thing. Mart has hold of the other end, and he's got an anchor hitch around the man-behind-the-gun that we waltzed off the wall. Go, and be swift with you!"

Not pausing to argue, Perry climbed up, hand over hand, like a good fellow.

Halting at the top of the wall, our hero stood guard while Tom ran back, fastening his end of the rope to the nearest iron grating.

Then up, hand over hand, in the same fashion, came Lannigan.

To Mart, below, they signalled that he could let go of the rope.

"Go down, Tom. I'll stand guard with the pistol." Down to the earth slid the Irish boy.

Then, without loss of a second, Perry followed.

He paused long enough to grip Mart's hand in a vise-like pressure.

"Now, where?" trembled Mart, eagerly.

"There's only one place where we fit," Jack thrilled. "The tall timber beyond is the only home for us! But do you know how many sentries there are outside this old jail?"

"Two, close to the main gate," Tom whispered, promptly.
"When we crept by there they were, squatting on the ground by a lantern, playing with a dirty pack of cards. Their guns were a few feet off. We were sore tempted to try stealing up behind them to get their guns."

"We'll do it now," planned Jack, instantly. "By good luck, we've got one rifle, a revolver and a sword to start with. Fellows, we'll have those other rifles, and get away with them, or lie down here on the sand and give up the fight! Come on! You lead the way, Tom, for you know where the sentries are."

The sentry whom Lannigan and Mart Stanley had so neatly roped off the wall now lay bound and gagged, while Mart clutched his rifle and ammunition boxes.

Tom carried the bared sword, giving it a vicious swirl through the air with all the steam in that strong young Irish arm.

Jack looked to his pistol, found it ready for instant use, and then followed Lannigan.

Around the carcel they went with the stealthy tread of cats.

It was too late for ordinary citizens to be astir, but that made the stillness of the night all the more dangerous.

Around two corners of the stone wall of the carcel they stole. Then they crouched in sight of the heavy, barred gate.

There, by the light of a lantern resting on the ground beside them, sat the two soldiers, as interested as ever in their game of cards.

Twenty feet nearer our young Americans lay the two rest, lad!" rifles and the cartridge boxes. "I wond

"I'll get the guns," whispered Tom, in our hero's ear.

"Leave your sword here, then. You'll need both hands in turn.

free. We'll cover you and shoot if the ragged soldiers make a stir."

Like a cat, Tom glided forward, taking his time about it with the coolness of an old campaigner.

While the absorbed soldiers chattered an over their game, Lannigan picked up his two rifles, the cartridge boxes, and turned.

Trembling, throbbing, Jack Perry watched the return of his brave comrade.

Tom was swiftly with his friends. He passed one of the rifles to our hero, keeping the other himself.

Picking up the commandante's sword again, Lannigan followed at Mart's heels, the latter keeping close in Perry's wake

There was no hesitation. They stole out past one end of the town, reaching a grove of cocoanut palms a mile beyond before they halted or spoke.

But now they stopped, to rest in the hot, tropical night and to form their plans.

"I was afraid the soldiers would go after you fellows and jug you," muttered Jack, as he mopped his dripping forehead.

"So they did, I'm thinking," grinned Tom. "But we heard a fracas in the street, and we started to dress. We saw the soldiers step away with you, lad, and so we wasn't in our rooms when the military gentlemen called for us."

"But how on earth did you think up the scheme for getting me out?"

"Why, that wasn't hard, either," grinned Mart Stanley. "As to the rope—well, not to be too nice about it, we stole it while we were prowling about town thinking up a plan. Then we spied around the jail. There's a lot of brush near the wall where that man-behind-the-gun was doing the cake-walk. The fact that there was a sentry there made us suspicion that he was there for a purpose."

"So we watched our chance and kept stealing nearer," chipped in Tom. "We were able to get good hiding behind the brush. Then we heard you and Banda jabbering away in that greaser-talk, and we had you located, lad. So, then, we watched our chance when the lad in the striped blouse and pants turned. We didn't know quite what good we'd do by lynching the man-behind-the-gun, but we heard you and Banda talking pretty loud, so we figured it was time to take a chance."

"Who threw that rope so handsomely?" Jack demanded, eagerly.

"I did," Mart confessed. "You see, Jack, I've tried my hand at a good many things. Once I had a notion I'd turn cowboy, and so I practiced with a rope."

"It was beautifully done!" Perry glowed.

"Now, you see," Lannigan went on, "when the soldier boy of Honduras dived off the wall, and there wasn't any holler on the other side, we savvied that things were right. So, then, we threw the rope over, and—well, you know the rest, lad!"

"I wonder if any fellow ever had two such nervy friends as you!" throbbed Jack Perry, grasping the hand of each

boom of a cannon came to them on the night air.

It was followed by the rapid discharge of rifles. Then the cathedral bell joined in the racket by booming solemnly.

"Our little job has been caught up with!" grimaced Jack, gripping his rifle more firmly. "It's time for us to hike for still taller timber!"

"I hate to run from the greasers!" choked Lannigan.

"So do I," Jack assented. "If they catch up with us we can put up a pretty fair fight, with some three hundred cartridges between us. But if we can help it we don't want to fight-not until we've got more men behind us. Remember, we mustn't spoil the great plans of Senor Lopez. Help old Lopez, as he wants us to do, and-why, fellows, we'll have the supreme pleasure of chasing Banda and his whole crowd out of the country."

"That's the tune-sing it loud!" vibrated Mart.

"Three tickets to the tall timber!" grinned Jack, as he turned, leading the way

On the still night air came the sudden, sharp scurrying of hoofs.

"A cavalry patrol to start the ball!" jolted Jack.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK TAKES HIS ORDERS.

"You will be careful, Senor Perry?"

"Very careful, sir!"

"Just one false move now and all Senor Lopez's plans and hopes are gone-broken-shattered," continued Senor Pablo Gomez.

After forty-eight hours of hiding in the jungle, feasting only on oranges, bananas and cocoanut pulp, our young friends had been found by their first Honduran friend, Gomez.

A friendly and trusted Indian, sent by Gomez, had trailed and scouted through the jungle until he came upon the boys, who had been missed utterly by the searching half hundred troops sent out by Banda.

In Spanish, that Indian had made Jack understand that he was sent by Gomez.

Then the Indian had disappeared back into the jungle, only to return, five hours later, accompanied by Pablo

Our friends were camped, now, in the deep jungle, some seven miles from Truxillo.

Moreover, the spot had much of the appearance of a military camp.

For the coming of Gomez had been followed by the arrival of fully twenty Indians, faithful to Gomez and Lopez.

These Indians were armed with Mauser rifles and an abundance of cartridges.

"These Indians will stay with you, watch over you, die for you," Gomez declared. "They are at your orders,

"Smoking bats! What's that?" gasped Tom, as the any struggle with the troops of Honduras. Let the authorities once suspect that there is a band of armed revolutionists out here in the woods, and the government will act promptly. The revolution will be put down promptly, and the plans of our good Lopez will be nipped. Indeed, Senor Lopez and myself would then be lucky to escape with our lives."

"I shall be careful," Jack promised again.

"Banda would have an excuse to throw Senor Lopez into the carcel," Gomez hinted. "Then Anita might have to wed the commandante in order to save her father's life! It would be awful!"

"Rest easy on that score," cried Jack, his eyes flashing. "If Banda tries to force Anita to become his wife, I'll have the scoundrel's life, if it's my last act on earth!"

"You love her?" queried Gomez, his voice trembling.

"Who could help loving her?" countered Jack, honestly.

"Not I, for one," sighed Gomez.

"Ah!"

"We will be honest about it, you and I," cried Gomez, impulsively, stretching out his hand to our hero. "We will each act like a man-no tricks and no unfair advantages. Anita shall choose between us, some day, if she will condescend to look at either of us."

"Spoken like a man!" throbbed Jack. "Gomez, if I can't win, I'll fight for your chance to do it!"

They clasped hands long and ardently, in this solemn, though impulsive, pledge.

They were talking in English, a language understood by none of the Indians who stood looking curiously on.

But one old Indian, who had been eyeing our hero curiously for some minutes, now spoke in the Indian dialect to Gomez.

"What do you suppose the old fellow says?" asked the Honduran, turning to Perry.

"How on earth can I guess?" demanded Perry.

"He is talking about an old Indian tradition."

"What is it?"

"One that has been handed down among the Indians by their own Indian priests. When the Spaniards first conquered this country, the Indian priests taught that one day one of their heathen gods would come down from the heavens on some day in the future. That god would be a white man, whiter than the Spaniards. The old fellow was just speaking to me about that legend."

"You didn't answer him, did you?" thrilled Jack, suddenly.

"Not yet."

"Then don't!" vibrated Perry. "Don't dare talk back to that Indian until you've caught the whole tune from me. Wait until I give the word! When I say ready, then turn and fire it into the heathen redskin that I'm i-t, IT! Tell him, I'm that very heathen god, just down from the Indian's heaven, and red-hot for business!"

"What?" gasped Gomez, turning several shades whiter as his nearest approach to going pale.

"Don't look so startled. Don't seem scared out of your Senor Perry. Yet be careful not to become embroiled in boots!" throbbed our hero. "Don't let the redskins see that you're hocussed! Get a brace on, Gomez! Pull yourself together, man! Just try to believe that I am in reality an eighteen-carat, simon-pure heathen god!"

"But this is absurd!" quivered Pablo Gomez.

"Absurd? Not a blamed bit of it! Not if the Indians will swallow the yarn. It's the real goods, a yard wide and warranted not to fade! It's the real thing. Why, man, just get behind that con game and push it through, and I'll swarm the Indian vote for you in every ward in Honduras. We'll have President Roquero on the run for his hole inside of a week! We'll have the whole present crooked Honduran government chasing butterflies over the line in Costa Rica! Why, it's going to be the leadiest kind of a lead-pipe cinch! Old man, why didn't you put me wise my first day in Honduras, that I was the real thing in a sixty-three heathen Indian God?"

Gomez couldn't follow the whole line of rapid, eager talk that came from our hero, but he looked so genuinely startled that Jack Perry saw, out of the corners of his eyes, that the Indians were drawing closer and looking on with the closest attention.

"You tell 'em, in a minute, that I'm the long lost, much-looked-for god, and we'll have the Indians falling over each other on the jungle trails to get to this camp!" predicted Jack Perry.

"Glory be! It's no fool dream!" chimed in Tom Lannigan. "But give 'em better than one heathen god, Gomez, lad. Tell these redskins, and cross your heart, that their heathen heaven sent three of the smartest young gods it had to do the trick!"

"But you don't seem to understand, senores," mumbled Gomez.

"Don't understand what?" Jack demanded.

"It will never do to tell any such tale to these Indians. Don't you realize that the Indians look for their white god to come down from heaven to drive out the Spaniards for good? Let these Indians believe that you're their heaven-sent leader, and there'll be war for wiping out all the people of Spanish blood in this country. We've always been able to keep the Indians in check so-far—we ten thousand whites against four hundred thousand Indians. But let them once believe that they're led by a heaven-sent leader, and they'll insist on killing every last man with a white skin. It will be the wiping out of the ruling class in Honduras, Senor Perry!"

"Gomez, your mind doesn't seem to be working to-day," observed our hero.

"I shall be glad to have you explain, senor."

"What's the use of being a heathen god if I can't steer politics to suit myself?" Jack demanded, contemptuously.

"So you would be the real ruler of Honduras?" cried Gomez, his eyes flashing with a new light of suspicion.

"Chase that idea away," Jack retorted. "Do you think I'd go back on my word to Senor Lopez—Anita's father?"

"Then how could you satisfy these Indians if you did not wipe out the Spanish descendants in Honduras?" faltered Gomez.

"Why, easily enough," Jack returned, with spirit. "I'll

explain things to these people. I'll tell them that the prophecy meant that only the bad Spaniards would be expelled from this country. That means President Roquero and his whole crowd, down even to Banda. Then I'll teach these simple-minded Indians that heaven has willed that they should be governed by the good Spaniards. That means by Lopez, Gomez & Co. Why, it's all the easiest thing in politics that you ever heard of, Gomez! Now, tell these Indians that I'm IT, senor. Tell them that I'm the heathen god that they've been waiting for. And, for a good starter, get down on your own knees, Gomez. Get down, quick! Mind! I'm taking my orders from the Indian's heaven direct, now. Don't forget it. And make these Indians believe it, too. On your knees, Senor Gomez!"

Utterly startled though he was, Pablo Gomez, as he glanced swiftly at the interested Indians, who, in turn, were devouring Jack Perry with their restless eyes, knew that the moment had come.

Down on his knees went the Honduran, and struck the earth three times with his forehead before Jack.

Then, in rapid words in the Indian dialect, Gomez began to talk.

At the first sound of his voice the redskins threw themselves flat, grovelling, afraid to lift their eyes to Jack Perry. "It's working all right?" Jack demanded.

"They seem to believe," confessed the Honduran.

Then the old Indian began to talk in gutteral tones.

"He demands," translated Pablo Gomez, "that their god address them in their own tongue."

"You're caught, Jack!" clicked Tom Lannigan.

"Not a bit of it," Jack returned, coolly. "Gomez, tell them that I hear all that they say. Tell them, too, that they must worship and obey for many days before I will consent to talk to them."

"How will you ever talk to them in their own patter?" came in Tom's low voice.

"How?" repeated Jack. "Why, Gomez must teach me the Indian language. I can learn fast. And you fellows must learn, too, as you've been learning Spanish lately. Gomez, tell these redskins to worship me in silence until I clap my hands for them to rise."

The Indians lay flat in worship. Jack Perry had won!

CHAPTER VII.

THE GET-THERE BOYS SPOIL FOR FIGHT.

"Halt! Rats! You can't make these redskins drill!"
Mart Stanley sighed as he halted his awkward company
and turned to Jack Perry.

"They don't like drilling—that's sure," Perry smiled. "But Tom brings down word from the other camp that he believes they'll fight like sin when they get a chance."

"It's fight they're aching for," muttered Mart, disgustedly. "But how will they fight? Each man will want to go in for himself. Now, the men in the Honduran

army, being mostly white men, are mighty well drilled. They'll knock spots out of us when we meet."

Mart was in plain despair over the redskin recruits.

It was two weeks since Jack had been hailed by the Indians as the saintly leader whom their own red priests had told them about.

These Honduran Indians were eager to fight, and obedient, but they simply could not seem to grasp the meaning of the drill commands.

Mart had never before seen anything more than a militia drill at home, but he was quick to learn new things. He had absorbed all of the drill that Perry had brought fresh from military school.

The drill commands had been translated into Spanish, and then, as the Get-There Boys mastered the Indian dialect, the commands were given in that tongue.

Working secretly, taking only Indians who could be trusted, Gomez, in the fortnight, had gotten together some two hundred Indians.

Fifty of these were now in camp in a thick jungle, some eight miles from Truxillo. These men were organized into a company, with Mart as captain.

Twelve miles further back in the jungle was Tom Lannigan, with the remaining hundred and fifty recruits. These were organized into three companies, with native officers, the Irish boy serving as major.

"Oh, well," hinted Jack, "these men won't be needed for some weeks to come. They'll learn more drill in that time. Gomez doesn't dare to have us move until we have two thousand men, instead of two hundred."

"And the Honduran government can bring fifteen hundred well-trained soldiers against us," groaned Mart. "I never saw a battle, and don't know anything about war, but I can see just how our mob will go against an army that is somewhere near real."

"But we'll be able to win over some of the Honduran troops," Perry replied, soothingly. "Gomez counts on that, you know."

"Gomez counted on these good-natured, dull-witted Indians making good troops," groaned Mart. "The trouble with Gomez is that he knows less than I do about fighting."

"Oh, we'll win out," said Jack, cheerfully. You know our motto—'Get There!' We'll do it."

"I might as well dismiss the company," uttered Mart, disgustedly.

"Yes; and give them another hour of drilling just before dark. Do your best with them, Mart, and don't croak."

One who has not been in Honduras cannot well understand how secure the goings-on in this clearing in the jungle were from the knowledge of the authorities in Truxillo, ight miles away.

To reach the clearing, one had to go through more than four miles of the deepest jungle, through which only an experienced guide could penetrate.

Gomez had brought them word that the forming of a revolutionary "army" was not even suspected by the Honduran authorities at Truxillo or elsewhere.

There was but one drawback to this camp.

The Indians, though freely supplied with ammunition, had no chance for target practice.

On the still, tropical air the sound of volley firing would have carried clearly to Truxillo.

"That's another trouble of ours," Mart went on, disgustedly. "We don't know whether any of these men of ours can hit the side of a hill."

"And we know that regular troops of Honduras can't shoot a whole lot better," laughed Jack. "Mart, you seem bent on croaking. Now, Tom takes the most cheerful view of his crowd. He believes they'll fight like sin, and he's only eager to lead them into a shindy."

"It's different with Tom," jeered Mart. "He's ready to believe everything good of these dull Indians ever since he laid eyes on that copper-skinned little daughter of a chief."

"She's certainly a pretty girl, anyway," Jack smiled.

"Huh! An Indian for a girl!"

Mart wandered off by himself to vent his disturbed feelings.

Stanley saw only the darker side of the picture. He seemed convinced that their enterprise must fail.

But Perry was all cheeriness.

He had persuaded himself that the revolution must succeed. He was certain that he would yet seat Senor Sebastian Lopez as president in the Honduran "White House" at Tegucigalpa.

"Oo-ee! oo-ee! oo-ee!"

A low call came through the jungle. Jack started up from the doorway of the bark hut where he had been sitting.

That call came from Indian outposts. It signifies that a visitor or visitors were approaching.

"It must be Gomez," Jack thought, as, with hand over his eyes, he peered into the jungle through the light of late afternoon.

And it was Gomez, plodding onward between two stalwart redskins.

"What on earth can ail the fellow?" wondered Jack. Then suddenly a suspicion dawned on our hero.

"Great Scott!" palpitated the boy. "If he has learned the truth it may cost us all our lives!"

"So!" hailed Pablo Gomez, scowling, as he quickly advanced. "Senor Perry, I have found you out."

"Found out what?" queried Perry blandly, wholly on his guard now.

"I thought you friends—good, honest young men," cried the Honduran. "But you are impostors!"

"Be careful!" Jack warned. "Remember that you are in my camp when you see fit to insult me!"

"Bah! I will unmask you to these Indians, too."

"That will be kind of hard," smiled Perry, "after you have given them your word that we are the real thing, straight down from their heaven. You would only make yourself out a liar! Now, be a good fellow, Gomez, like you've always been before. Tell me what on earth you're talking about when you say you've found us out? Are you going to give me your hand?"

Gomez hesitated, then, with a half-bad grace, took Jack's hand.

"That's better, old man!" cried our hero, blithely. "Now get down to your news."

Mart, waked up out of a doze, came to the doorway of the hut.

"I have heard from Senor Carson," hinted the Honduran, darkly.

"Well?"

"He never sent you to me."

"I never said he did," Jack agreed, blandly.

"You didn't?"

Gomez gasped, staring at our hero in wonder.

"Never told you a word about Carson sending us down to you," Jack went on, glibly. "Search your memory and you'll find I'm right. What happened, Gomez, was that you told us Carson sent us."

"But you never corrected me, Senor Perry!"

"Why should I?" Jack demanded, easily. "We found a mighty good-paying snap before us if we kept our mouths shut and let you have your own way. We couldn't refuse a big thing like that. Remember, Gomez, old fellow, that you rather forced it on us, didn't you?"

The Honduran seemed non-plussed with amazement.

"Besides," chirped Jack, "what harm did it do? We're running your insurgent army, aren't we?—at least, as much of an army as you've been able to get together."

"But you told me you'd been a captain back in your country."

"So I was—captain of A Company at one of the smartest of the smart military boarding schools."

"School?" retorted the Honduran, gnashing his teeth.

"Well, what did you expect of a kid of seventeen?"

"Seventeen?" burst from Gomez's lips in sheer amazement.

"That's my age," Jack admitted. "If you know anything at all, you would know that I couldn't be a captain in our regular army at any such age. Come on, now, Gomez, tell me what this is all about."

"It is not to laugh," protested the poor fellow, his breath coming short, and something like a sob sounding in his voice. "The men Senor Carson sent us reached Truxillo this morning."

"Well, then, we'll get out and let them take command of your dinky little army," Jack proposed, pleasantly.

"But they can't. They're in the carcel!" cried Gomez.

"In the carcel?" Jack echoed. "Your government down here seems to have a chronic habit of putting tourists in jail for a starter."

"There were six of these men," Gomez went on, quiveringly. "It seems that they had been sergeants, or something of that sort, in your American regular army. They got ashore this morning and waited for me to look them up. But of course, Senor Perry, I knew nothing about them. While waiting, at a drinking place in the plaza, they drank too much liquor, these American soldiers—and then they talked too much."

"Talked too much?" Jack repeated, new light coming to him.

"So that they were arrested and taken to the carcel-"

"They didn't go without putting up the prettiest kind of a jim-dandy scrap, if they were real American soldiers!" glowed Jack.

"I believe there are a few of our Honduran soldiers in the hospital," Gomez admitted.

"In the hospital, eh? Hurrah!"

Jack's patriotic pride in the scrapping abilities of American ex-soldiers was catching. Mart came out of the hut, glowing.

"But these half dozen Americans of yours were tricked into talking too much," Gomez cried, actually weeping now. "Our revolution is discovered—at least, strongly suspected. It cannot take place now, for Senor Don Sebastian Lopez, too, is in the carcel now."

"Good old Don Sebastion in jail?" thundered Jack, gripping Gomez by the arm. "If you're lying to me, man, I'll punch your nose around to the back of your head!"

"Poor Don Sebastian is Commandante Banda's prisoner at the carcel," moaned Gomez. "I escaped only by a miracle. Banda has telegraphed President Roquero at——"

"Hang Banda and the President, too!" bellowed Jack. "Where's Miss Lopez—Anita?"

"At her home yet. She is under the care of her aunt. But Banda has sent her a hint that the only possible way to save her father will be for her to marry that scoundrel of a commandante at once."

"Anita marry Banda?" Dick thrilled.

"She may have to, or else I fear that Senor Lopez will be shot. Banda could so easily explain that Lopez was shot while trying to escape. And that would remove an enemy of the President, so that it would be very convenient all around."

"They won't be married this evening, will they?" Jack demanded, his eyes fairly blazing.

"Heaven grant not!" Pablo Gomez fervently exclaimed.

"And you escaped, yet left Anita to face such music?"

Jack throbbed.

"It was impossible to bring that unhappy girl into the jungle with me," protested Gomez, in a shocked voice.

"There's something in that," Perry admitted, with a moment's calmness of speech.

Then, suddenly, our hero turned, almost shouting:

"Captain Stanley!"

"What's that, Jack?" Mart demanded, opening his eyes in mild astonishment.

"Stanley, you lop-sided idiot, you're a soldier now—try to remember it. When I call you, step forward, knock your heels together, bring your right hand up in a military salute, and then stand at attention. Well, why in blazes don't you do it?"

For fully thirty seconds Mart Stanley stared at his chum in growing amazement.

"Salute me, you blockhead! Then stand at attention for orders. Captain Stanley!"

"Good enough! Now send me your swiftest Indian runner—no! Two of 'em!"

"All right," Mart nodded.

"Stop! Say 'very good, sir,' and salute again."

"Very good, sir," Mart conceded, also saluting.

"Walk off like a soldier, too," Jack shot after his chum.
"There," he added, under his breath, "I may succeed in getting it into poor old Mart's head that we'll be out for real business to-night."

Stepping inside the hut, Jack found a pad of paper and a fountain pen. As rapidly as he could he penned this order:

"Thomas Lannigan, Major:

"You are hereby directed to march your entire command with all due speed to headquarters. Do not march your men so fast as to wear them out on the way, as there will be more marching and a real fight to-night. Bring all your ammunition. Leave the women and children behind, and a detail not exceeding six men to guard them in the absence of your main command. Act promptly upon receipt of this order.

"PERRY, commanding."

"Won't that make Tom's eyes stick out and shine, though!" muttered Jack, as he thrust the folded paper into an envelope.

"Your two runners, sir," reported Mart Stanley, halting in the doorway of the tent and saluting.

"Very good, captain," Jack replied, stepping out.

Our hero handed the envelope to one of the pair of Indians, giving his orders also.

Jack stood watching the two runners as they vanished into the jungle beyond. Mart stood silently by—a most unusual thing for him to do, but he was rapidly learning the lesson of military discipline.

"Now, Senor, perhaps you'll be good enough to explain what you are going to do," Gomez hinted, smiling darkly.

"My title is General, after this," Jack broke in, crisply. "General?" scoffed Gomez. "Why, you are my creature!"

"You were never more mistaken in your life," Jack warned him, promptly. "When an American takes command, he goes the whole hog! I'm General now, even

though my army is nothing more than a couple hundred of mobby and badly tricked redskins."

"But you're under my orders in Senor Lopez's absence," protested Pablo Gomez, flushing darkly.

"Another mistake of yours, Gomez. I'm in supreme command here, and I shall be until the last of the fighting is over."

"You're going to play us false—Don Sebastian and myself?" cried the Honduran, hoarsely.

"You're full of mistakes to-day," Jack retorted, simply.
"No; I'm not going to play you false, either of you. But when war is on the military man must be the sole boss until the fighting is done. Gomez, I shall protect Don Sebastian Lopez with my life, and with all the forces I within the ne can raise. When the fighting is over, if I have won, I home and abed.

shall place Don Sebastian in the President's chair. Then, if I am asked to, I will drop command of the new army and step down and out. But at present I'm boss in this outfit, and the only boss there is going to be!"

"May I inquire, then, General, what you mean to do first?" Gomez queried, in a voice that was almost mocking.

"Do?" echoed Jack Perry. "I'm going to do the only thing that's left to do. With my two hundred men I shall march on Truxillo. I shall do my best to defeat Banda and his hundred men, and save Don Sebastian. It will be too late to hide the revolution, then. So, then, we'll call for all the Indians and white men who are willing to follow us. We'll take the biggest chance there is by marching straight for Tegucigalpa and fight everything that gets in our way."

"When do you propose to attack Truxillo and Banda?"
"To-night."

"To-night? Then I must hasten back to town and make ready for the changes that are to come."

"Guess again! No one leaves here ahead of our main column. You stay with us and go with us. As General, I'll make all the plans, and give all the orders."

Then, placing a hand on the Honduran's shoulder, Jack added, gently:

"Don't be offended, or feel hurt, Gomez. I have the success of this business as much at heart as you have. We'il pull together—we've got to—but we'll remain friends, won't we?"

"Yes," Gomez admitted, faintly.

Jack turned to Stanley. Mart stiffened up, standing at attention. ready to receive orders.

CHAPTER VIII.

VASQUEZ, THE VULTURE OF BATTLE.

"Halt! Captain, go back along the line, with orders that there is to be no talking."

"I can take that order," whispered Gomez.

"Pardon, senor. You can't, as civilians can't carry military orders."

Perry smiled, as he looked into the Honduran's eyes. That smile robbed his reply of any bitterness that might have been in the words.

"I submit," sighed Gomez.

Mart Stanley was passing rapidly down the little line.

During the last mile through the forest the four companies of the little revolutionary "army" had marched in column of twos over a rough, narrow road.

The head of our hero's column now rested just at the edge of the tropical forest.

Ahead, about a mile, were the city of Truxillo and the carcel in which Don Sebastian lay a prisoner.

It was a little after eleven o'clock at night.

Within the next hour the last of the citizens would be at

"This bit of a rest won't hurt our men," muttered Jack, as he glanced back at the shadowy figures of the Indian troops, squatting by the roadside.

Lannigan's men had had a long march, but Indians are well nigh tireless on their legs.

Now came Tom forward, limping slightly, but in the best of spirits.

"I wonder will we get a real fight?" Tom murmured.

"I hope not," Jack answered, simply.

"Hope not?" retorted the Irish lad, scornfully. "What kind of talk is that for a soldier?"

"I'm thinking," Jack replied, "of the need we'll have for all our men in later fighting. We can't afford to lose any to-night."

"Why, the redskins are as crazy for a real fight as I am!" glowed Major Lannigan. "And think of the fine rifles they have, and the lashings of cartridges that they want to fire off!"

"They'll need some of those cartridges in later fights," spoke Perry, soberly.

In truth, the Indians were well armed. Each of them carried a Mauser rifle in good condition.

Don Sebastion Lopez, when he first conceived the plan of starting a revolution, had smuggled two thousand Mauser rifles into the country. These guns were now hidden at handy points.

"How long are you going to wait?" Tom asked.

"Until nearly one o'clock. The rest won't hurt the men."

"And then?"

"When we go forward, major, you'll use your three companies to surround the carcel. Look out that you don't get surrounded, in turn, by reinforcements that may come up. With Stanley's company I'll force my way into the carcel. Then we'll fight if we have to. Don't let your men be discovered, major, until I've sneaked my one company right up to the entrance to the carcel."

For some minutes the three Get-There Boys discussed their further plans. Pablo Gomez, since his advice was not asked, smoked innumerable cigarettes as the time flew by.

Midnight sounded on the cathedral bell over in the town. Jack set his watch by that. He waited until after 12.30, then sent the silent signal down the line.

True to their natural instincts, the Indians proved their worth at stealing forward in the dark without sound.

Close to the town, Tom drew away his three companies by other roads, Jack, Mart and Gomez going on at the head of the remaining company.

In single file, keeping under the shadow of the trees that lined the road, Jack's single company stole nearer and nearer to the gate of the carcel.

They could make out two sentries leaning drowsily on their rifles before the gate.

With six of his best redskins, Jack stole slowly nearer, while Mart waited at the head of the company.

Suddenly, in the darkness, Perry leaped out of the shadow, before the astounded sentries.

His six followers were just behind him, levelling their rifles at the Honduran soldiers.

"Throw down your guns, or you're dead men!" Jack commanded, sharply.

The sentries obeyed, trembling. An officer, hearing the sound of voices, hurried out, to find himself staring at the muzzle of Jack Perry's levelled revolver.

From back down the road came the sturdy shout of:

"Viva la revolucion!" (Long live the revolution!)

From all sides of the carcel the cry was repeated, in a thunderous volley of voices. Tom Lannigan had gotten his three companies placed.

At a bound Jack leaped through the gate, followed by his six men, and then by the rest of Mart's company.

Eight or ten soldiers appeared to oppose them, then drew hastily back into the guardhouse.

Colonel Banda's office door opened. The commandante himself appeared.

"My prisoner, Senor Commandante!" Perry cried, briskly.

Another man darted out past Banda, dashing across the courtyard and into another stone-walled room.

Filled with a nameless dread, Jack followed at a sprint, shouting as he ran:

"Catch Banda, Mart!"

After the other fugitive Jack pounced.

The room into which the chase led was lined by four cells. A lighted lantern threw some light over the scene. Straight at one of the cell doors dashed Jack's fugitive

A revolver glistened in the fellow's hand. He raised, firing a shot through the cell door.

"Stop that, or I'll kill you!" thundered Jack Perry.

The fellow turned. He and Jack fired at the same instant, each missing the other.

Then the fellow turned, dashing down a corridor.

But our hero did not pursue.

Instead, he dashed at that cell door.

"Don Sebastian," he cried, "are you hurt?"

"Heaven be thanked, I am not!" came in the voice of Senor Lopez.

"Wait an instant, sir, and we'll get this door open."

Jack hastened back to the courtyard.

He had heard a few shots there.

As he stepped out, he stumbled over the dead body of a Honduran soldier.

But the fight was over now.

Mart had demanded and had secured the surrender of the few soldiers astir at the guardhouse.

Tom Lannigan had led two of his own companies into the barracks.

There the soldiers who were aroused from their sleep were quickly reduced to submission.

"Captain," Jack directed, tersely, "find the fellow with the keys, and make him release Don Sebastian. Shoot the fellow if he hesitates!"

Then our hero hastened back to Senor Lopez.

"That rascal who tried to shoot you," Jack began,

through the cell door. "I recognized him. He is the rascal who tried to stab me my first night in this country."

"That was Vasquez, Banda's brigand follower," commented Don Sebastian drily.

"If he has been caught, he'll be lucky to escape hanging," Jack retorted, drily.

The turnkey was marched in. Don Sebastion was quickly set at liberty, falling into the arms of Senor Gomez.

"Now, Mart," our hero went on, "round up all the prisoners. I'm anxious to talk to Banda—and to Vasquez, if the scoundrel has been caught."

But a surprise awaited the Get-There Boys. In the excitement both Banda and his Vasquez had vanished.

"What's that racket?" demanded our hero, rushing to the gate of the carcel as he heard the tramp of hoofs.

"Cavalry horses being brought around from the stables," Tom replied. "Twenty pretty fair animals."

"Have them saddled, then."

"They are saddled already."

Jack turned to look over six men who had just been released.

These were the six ex-soldiers from Uncle Sam's army, who had been locked up in another part of the carcel.

"All soldiers?" Jack demanded, eyeing the men, who stood looking sheepishly at him.

They were sober now, after their hours under arrest.

"All soldiers, sir," replied one of them, saluting.

"You'll serve with us?" Jack demanded.

"That we will, sir."

"Good enough. You shall each have a company as soon as we have a few more men. Your name?"

"Raymond, sir-formerly Sergeant Raymond, United States regular army."

They were soldierly enough looking men, despite their civilian clothes.

"Help yourselves to captured rifles," directed Jack, indicating several stands of arms that lay nearby.

"My daughter!" cried Dan Sebastian, hurrying forward. "She is without protection!"

"I haven't forgotten her, sir," Perry quivered. "I'm headed for your house now. Raymond, can you and your friends ride?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then pick your mounts and follow me like the wind. Mart, take your company and patrol the town. Tom, stay here with your men and hold the fort. Ready, Raymond!"

Vaulting into the saddle of the nearest horse, Jack Perry rode away at a gallop.

But the six American ex-soldiers followed in good style, Our hero felt bold as a lion with six such men as he imagined these to be behind him.

Truxillo was already wildly astir, having been roused by the yells and the shots at the carcel.

But Jack and his escort rode through the town and out again, like a whirlwind.

himself turning in at the broad driveway leading up to Don Sebastian's house.

"Help! Help!"

It was Anita's voice. Jack dug his heels desperately into the flanks of the animal that he rode.

A girl's slender figure, all in white, appeared on one of the low balconies of the second story of the house.

Behind her appeared Vasquez, rushing at her with knife uplifted.

"Jump, Anita!" implored Jack Perry, rising in his stirrups as he pelted forward.

Not for an instant did the girl hesitate. She sprang over the rail, landing on the ground in a heap, just as our hero reined up and leaped down to her side.

Vasquez, too, had jumped, running, now, as fast as he could away from the house.

"Get that scoundrel-kill him if you have to!" Jack shouted.

"Are you hurt-dear?" Perry asked, bending over the girl.

The last word had escaped him before he thought. But the girl did not appear to notice.

"I am not hurt, Senor Perry," she replied, rising as he aided her to do so. "But my father?"

"He is quite safe."

"What has happened?"

"A revolution has started."

Anita did not seem astounded at this last news.

Revolutions happen often in Central America.

"Who heads it?" she asked, quickly.

Jack, as if he had forgotten, still kept his arm lightly around her waist.

"Your father will be the next President, if this night's work winds up in success."

"Is he leading the troops, then?" she cried, eagerly, her eves aflame.

"No; I'm leading the fighting end."

"You?" Anita gasped, in genuine astonishment. "But I thought you an American merchant, or the agent of one."

"That was a bluff," Perry admitted, honestly. "But we are forgetting that scoundrel, Vasquez, Anita," he added, quickly; as three shots rang out.

His cavalry escort of the six American ex-soldiers had obeyed orders to the letter, galloping off after Vasquez.

"I wonder if they got him?" quivered Jack, gazing off into the darkness.

Then they heard the feet of returning horses.

"Get that rascal?" bellowed Jack.

"Not a get!" came in the disgusted tones of Raymond, as the little troop rode up. "He was off behind the trees like a greased streak. We rode on after him. Once we got just a look at him and fired, but a search of the ground all around showed that we didn't wing him. We didn't dare to go further, sir, for we didn't like to leave you and the young lady too far from help."

"Quite right," nodded Jack. "And now, senorita, for Nor did Jack Perry slacken pace, even when he found your carriage. We shall have to get it and drive into town, for your father, too, will want the carriage. We cannot tell how soon we shall set out for the capital."

"If my father takes to the field in a carriage," cried the girl, proudly, "then he has changed much."

"But it will not be safe to leave you behind. We shall want the carriage for you."

"Why, when I have my own saddle horse?" she cried.

"You-a girl with Spanish blood, taking to the field on horseback?" Perry cried, in surprise, for Spanish girls seldom ride in saddle.

"I have lived in England. You forget that, senor," the girl cried, laughingly. "Come, follow me to the stables, and I will show you my father's horse, and the one that I shall ride."

Three of the frightened men servants now showed up.

The two horses were saddled. Jack proudly, and with his heart all a-thump, gave his hand to help Anita up to

One of the men servants was ordered to mount the other horse.

"And you other chaps, follow us to town, all of you," Jack ordered. "We shall want you for recruits."

"You forget," cried Anita, teasingly, "that if I am going into the field for a few days I shall need a few

"True," muttered Perry. "Then suppose you call one of those scared-to-death women over there. She can pack your baggage, and one of these fellows can drive it into town in a light cart."

Anita soon had this part of the business attended to.

"Into town now," cried Jack, twitching at his horse's bridle. "We don't know what this lively night may have in store for us."

CHAPTER IX.

BANDA PUTS UP A FIGHTING FRONT.

When Jack and his little party got back there things were seething hot in Truxillo.

The citizens, pulled out of bed by the starting of the revolution, were in a state of great excitement.

The shutters were up over store windows; doors were bolted tight.

In a Central American revolution the first instinct of the insurgents is to pillage and loot.

But Tom Lannigan was holding down three companies of his men at the carcel. Mart Stanley, with but fifty men in and around the plaza, was holding down his company with a stern hand.

The belief of these Indian recruits that they were being led by young gods sent down from their heaven made the authority of the American boys much more secure.

Startled men swarmed the streets, but none of the expected violences happened.

Honduras, were honestly glad that a revolution had started. "And our Indian recruits are something in the way of sol-

Faith in the honesty of Don Sebastian had led at least two hundred of the men of Truxillo to flock to the carcel.

These had offered their services to fight for the revolution.

Jack's first care was to see Anita safely with her father. Then he gave his attention to other matters.

"I have been holding these new recruits, to see if you wanted them," Pablo Gomez explained.

"We want every man that can be trusted," Jack replied, quickly. "Pick out all that you think can be trusted, Gomez, and get Don Sebastian to swear them into his cause."

"And what are we to do here, Senor Perry?"

"Address me as General, please," replied Jack, stiffly, though there was a twinkle of mischief in his eyes.

"What are we to do, General? Are we to wait here at Truxillo until more recruits come in?"

"The main idea is to reach Tegucigalpa and upset the government of President Roquero, isn't it?" Perry demanded.

"That, of course, we must do, General, when we are strong enough in numbers, and have our troops well enough

"Then we'll move forward at once," Jack replied

"What? Set out for the capital now?"

"We start soon after daylight," Jack replied.

"It will be madness, senor!"

"General," Jack corrected, sternly.

"General I meant."

"And, as I am General, I will plan the campaign," Perry went on, firmly. "If we are to gain recruits rapidly, we must show a bold front. Let our forces march on at once. It will take some days to reach the capital of this country. On our way there runners must scour the country trying to drum up recruits for our victorious army. It's the only way."

"But you know that Colonel Banda escaped to-night?"

"In other towns, not so for away, other men of his regiment are stationed. This late commandante of Truxillo will have been using the telegraph wires before this!" cried Gomez, anxiously.

"I understand that," Jack replied, thoughtfully. "Undoubtedly, by this time, using the telegraph wires, Banda has ordered a considerable force of his seasoned regular troops to meet quickly at some point between here and Tegucigalpa."

"Ah! Then you understand?" cried Gomez, feverishly. "Now, senor-pardon, General-if we encounter Banda in our road, and if he has a strong force of his regular troops, what are we to do?"

"Push him out of our path," Jack retorted.

"But with our inexperienced troops against his seasoned veterans?"

"His veterans may know how to fight, but they're not Some of these men, sick of the present government of such a much," rejoined the American boy, contemptuously. diers by this time. Moreover, believing that I'm a leader sent down from heaven to head them, they'll go where I do."

"But you've had no experience at fighting. Banda has. He understands how to handle a regiment of men in actual battle."

"Fighting is a trade that comes natural to some men," Jack laughed. "If it doesn't come easy to me, I'll turn the command over to Tom Lannigan. Besides, Gomez, you appear to forget that we have with us six old American soldiers, who have seen plenty of real fighting. And now enough of talk, for there's real work to do. Get your new recruits sworn in. I'm going to talk with the best men among the Indians, and get them to send out runners along the road to drum up more recruits on our way to Tegucigalpa."

"Then you're determined to start for Tegucigalpa?"

"In the morning," our hero assured him. "And after we start the march we don't stop except for sleep or when an enemy gets in our way."

Within an hour the recruits had been sworn in.

These new men, from Truxillo consisted largely of white men, some of whom had seen military service.

Rifles and ammunition were supplied promptly.

These men Jack divided into four companies. Over them, as captains, he appointed four of the American exsoldiers—by name, Evans, Rowley, Stein and Sullivan.

"You'll have to work in some of your drilling while we're on the march," Jack told his new captains. "But get them up to the real fighting pitch at the earliest possible moment."

Raymond, who appeared to be the most competent of the Americans, our hero appointed a colonel, and put him in over the four captains.

Tom Lannigan became a colonel, also, while Mart, with similar rank, was assigned to staff duty under Perry.

One company still continued on duty through the town for the night, with Tom in direct command.

Two other companies were stationed out on the two main roads that led into town. Their duty was to guard against sudden surprise.

The other five companies camped for the night close to the carcel, ready to go swiftly to any point that might be attacked.

"It's not a bad army for a start," Jack said, smilingly, to Gomez, later in the night. "I have two regiments of four companies each, and I have six officers who have seen stern, real, hard fighting. That bunch of American exregulars are as good fighting stuff as there is anwhere in the world."

Anita and her father were quartered for the night in Banda's old quarters, a strong guard being posted around the place.

Not a wink of sleep did Jack get that night.

With Gomez's aid our hero scoured the town for wagons and horses to draw them.

These were seized, wherever found, with a promise that the rigs should be paid for later on.

Food, in abundance, too, was taken from the stores and the warehouses.

Other vehicles were loaded down with cases of rifles and boxes of ammunition.

By five the little army was aroused. Breakfast was eaten in a hurry.

While this was going on, Perry presented himself before the door of Banda's former quarters.

"Send in my compliments to Don Sebastian," he ordered the sergeant of the guard. "Say also to his excellency that it will soon be time to start on the first stage of to-day's march. Last of all, ask his excellency if I may have the privilege of seeing him soon."

"All of which has been heard, and you may see me at once, General," cried a laughing voice, as the door swung open. "Come in, General."

Jack stepped into what had been Banda's office.

Anita came in to greet him, which she did by a smile only, remaining silent while her father spoke.

"Any sign of a government enemy, General?" asked Don Sebastian.

"None yet, your excellency, though I have scouts out on every road. And a hundred more recruits have come in this morning, your excellency. I shall organize them into two companies after you have sworn them in. It is my plan, Don Sebastian, to draw up the two regiments as soon as they have eaten. Then you might swear in the newest recruits and make some sort of a speech that will fire our men with new zeal."

Not long after, the little insurgent army was drawn up, while the other townspeople looked wonderingly on.

Swearing-in and speech were made according to programme. Jack appointed the one remaining American soldier, Prentiss, as captain of one of the new companies.

Then things happened quickly.

One company of men was marched out of Truxillo along the road to Tegucigalpa, the capital.

Five minutes later another company marched out.

Then Jack gave the order for the main body of the little army to get under way.

This comprised six companies, at the head of all riding Perry and his one staff officer, Mart.

Behind them came Don Sebastian Lopez and his daughter, and Gomez on horseback.

With them, on horseback, also rode a score of young men of the town who formed the new "president's" personal bodyguard.

But Mart, after having gone a little way out of the town, rode back to see the baggage train and its guard of one company start.

Ten minutes behind the baggage guard the remaining company started.

This rear guard was under the command of Captain Evans, who looked as if he could keep fifty green soldiers "licked into shape."

Loud cheers for the new revolutionary government followed the little army as it marched out of Truxillo.

These people of Honduras are quickly and surely impressed by the sight of soldiery.

But Jack Perry, as the column left Truxillo behind, was far from feeling any of the glory of military spectacle.

He was charged with the success of the expedition—with the safety, also, of Don Sebastian, and, what was far more important to the American boy, the precious safety of Anita Lopez.

"I wish we could have left her behind," quivered Jack, as he rode forward along the narrow road. "But it wouldn't have done. Anita would have become a prisoner of war the instant that government troops showed up in Truxillo."

Now that they were out on the long, winding road through the country, Jack, after consulting with Colonel Raymond, detached one of the six companies from the main body, dividing it into two platoons and sending one out on either flank to scout beyond the road.

These scouts were all Indians, at home in the woods.

After an hour, during which he was busy with these precautions of the march, Perry rode back to the rear and saluted Don Sebastian.

"Your excellency, we are as well protected against surprise as is possible," the boy reported. "I have sent Colonel Raymond ahead. He is an old campaigner, and will know what to do if anything happens. He is with the company that is acting as support, which is less than a quarter of a mile behind the company that is serving as advance guard. The advance is under command of Captain Rowley, who has served in several Indian campaigns back in the United States. We have flankers out, and a good rear guard. If we are surprised by any enemy it will not be for want of care."

"I am certain of that, General," Don Sebastian, replied, graciously.

Anita's eyes bade the boy remain with them, but some old fighting ancestor had cropped out in Jack Perry at last. He could think of nothing but the chances of fight.

Leaving Mart at the head of the main body of the little force of five hundred men, our hero galloped once more forward to Captain Raymond, who, also mounted, rode at the head of the company supporting the advance guard.

The road, none too good, led through a dense forest.

It was shady along that road, which made the heat of the tropical day more bearable.

"It is so beautiful here in these deep, grand old woods," cried Jack, "that it is hard to realize how soon we may run into government troops, who'll do their best to ambush us and wipe us off the face of the earth."

"That enemy," smiled Raymond, "will have to give us a bit of warning by firing a few shots at the advance guard. And if your Indian flankers are as good as they ought to be, they'll nose out any enemy on our flanks. I wouldn't ask for any better scouts on the flank than our own United States Indians would make."

"I believe these Honduran Indians will be almost as good—certainly better in their own jungle," Jack replied.

"We ought to know, before the day's over," nodded Colonel Raymond. "I believe that Banda, if he can get

enough government troops together, will try to wipe us out before dark."

At noon, just as a halt was to have been ordered, Jack and Raymond caught sight of an Indian recruit rushing down the road toward them.

The Indian bore a note. He handed it to Jack, who eagerly read. It was from Captain Rowley, and ran:

"Runners from front and flanks coming in and report presence of government troops quarter of a mile ahead. Probable number of enemy not yet known. Have halted advance guard while waiting for orders."

"It must be Banda and part of his regiment," Jack commented, eagerly, when Colonel Raymond, too, had read the communication.

"Banda, sure enough," returned Raymond. "I expected it."

Jack Perry turned unaccountably cold and shivered!

CHAPTER X.

"WE'RE GOING TO GET THERE-SOMEHOW!" GRITS JACK.

Now that he actually scented battle, was Jack Perry afraid?

It was a question that our hero put to himself indignantly.

Colonel Raymond, so used to battle that he knew he was not scared, did not even take the trouble to look closely at his young commander.

Of course, Jack wasn't afraid. How could any one be afraid? That was the way that the old soldier would have expressed himself.

"Shall we ride forward, sir?" asked Raymond.

"Of course," Jack assented.

He sent one of the men of the company back to order Mart up to the front.

Then the boy, who had never seen battle, and the old soldier, who had seen many, rode down the beautiful tropical road.

Within a few minutes they came upon their advance guard.

Rowley had thrown his company out in a single line, only two men of which line were in the road, the others extending off far into the forest on either side.

"There can't much get by us without giving a sound," reported Captain Rowley, saluting.

Jack looked up the road. There was not a thing in sight, except more forest.

For the first time our hero began to realize how serious a thing it is to manoeuver a military force in a fight.

"I'd turn the command over to Raymond, only for the look I'd see in Anita's eyes," the boy quivered.

More scouts came in as they sat there.

The government troops were just about a quarter of a

mile ahead, their force extending a quarter of a mile from either side of the road into the forest.

These government troops had thrown up low intrenchments.

"Of course their scouts have observed our approach, too." Jack commented.

"If Banda's there," replied Raymond, "he has known of our movements ever since we left Truxillo."

"There's only one thing to do, then," Perry replied. "That's to get through and past the enemy. Colonel, I'll tell you my plan. If you have any suggestions to make, then, well and good.

"In the first place, we'll send the advance guard through on the right of the road. The supporting company will go forward on the left. The baggage guard and his own personal bodyguard will look after the safety of Don Sebastian. The rear guard will halt where it is until further orders are sent back. You will take three companies out on to the right, and Colonel Lannigan three to the left. By the time that the advance and the support are in touch with the enemy, and firing has begun, you and Colonel Lannigan will have your men up and make the fight general and hard. You are to push through rapidly, scattering Banda's command, for, if the fight lags, Banda's men, who appear to number about three hundred, and are trained soldiers, may defeat us. All depends upon the quickness with which we close in with Banda's force."

"The plan couldn't be better!" cried Raymond, honestly. "It offers our only chance of winning."

Mart came galloping up. Through him our hero sent his orders back.

Now advance and support moved out on either side of the road.

Next the main body arrived at the front, marching stead-

It began to look more like a game. Jack, watching the movements of his little force, forgot to wonder whether he was afraid.

Colonel Raymond, with a cool nod, moved off into the forest to the right with his three companies.

"By the time I see you again we'll know something about a fight," was Tom Lannigan's parting comment, as, eagerly, the Irish boy dismounted, leaving his horse with an orderly.

Then Tom was off.

Some twenty of the scouts who had come in remained with "General" Perry as his own personal force on the road.

And now, at the signal, the forward march began.

Raymond's right flank and Tom's left were in touch at the road.

Between them rode Jack and Mart, preceded by the score of scouts.

Crack! That was a shot ahead, the signal shot, showing that the advance had gotten in touch with the enemy.

Then came an infernal din of shots ahead.

Hissing bullets tore through the small trees and shrubs, or dented into the big old monarchs of the forest.

One of the scouts just ahead dropped, dead, but the other scouts gave him not a thought.

"Are our men firing back, yet?" Jack demanded, listening.

In another instant he was answered, for a new and louder din jarred on the air.

"We're giving it back to them," chuckled the young general. "Whew! Things are hot up there now."

Things were "hot" along this very road, for that matter. Two more of the scouts dropped, wounded.

"Scatter into the woods on either side," called Jack to his scouts.

"Hadn't we better take to the woods ourselves?" demanded Mart, as two bullets fanned his face on either side.

"Go where you please," Jack snapped. "Nothing is going to drive me out of this road, the center of my command."

Now the enemy's bullets came driving down the road in a tempest. It seemed as if nothing could live in that exposed place.

"It's—it's a good deal like murder!" chattered Mart, uneasily. "We can't even get a sight of the fellows who are shooting all this lead against us."

"It is murder," Jack assented. "That's what all war is—murder!"

Then his eyes flashed with the spirit of the soldiers as he cried, merrily:

"I'm praying that our side does the best job of murder to-day, too. We'll have to if we're not to be wiped out."

Mart looked queerly at his young commander. But Jack Perry was happy now, under fire, in the sudden realization that, while he might be nervous, he was not afraid.

Mart was not afraid, either, though he could have wished himself well out of this road where death whistled incessantly.

There were more wounded ones about them, for that fire of the government troops was truly murderous.

Now, out on the far right, Raymond's men began to answer the fire.

It stole down the line. Tom Lannigan took it up instantly, as soon as he heard it.

All the time the revolutionary troops advanced.

Then Rowley came tearing out of the woods, saluting.

"Colonel Raymond, sir, asks permission to charge!"

"Tell him to do it," Jack quivered. "Tell him, with my compliments, to wind it all up quickly."

Then, to Mart:

"Colonel, my compliments to Lannigan, and tell him to charge, too. We must go forward with a rush."

Over on the right, among Raymond's men, a yell arose. It was the signal to charge.

That yell ran down the entire fighting line of the revolutionists.

Jack himself rode forward at a trot, just behind those of his scouts who survived on that bullet-swept road.

Mart was just hurrying back, on foot, from Lannigan, when Jack, looking ahead, saw the brown earth of the intrenchment across the road.

The firing had died out.

From here and there came cries as men fought, hand-to-hand, with either bullet or cold steel.

Jack rode into the trench, and just beyond.

Here the country was more open.

Looking down the long line of trench, our hero saw the forms of Honduran government soldiers stretched there in death.

"Colonel, ride to Raymond, and tell him to pursue the enemy ahead. I'll go to Lannigan myself and order him to halt here."

Tom, too, was in the trench as Jack rode down.

"It was good, but too short!" cried Tom, his left face streaked with blood from a scratch over his temple.

"It's only the first fight, colonel," replied Perry, drily. Raymond's men were soon back. The enemy had fled utterly and swiftly, leaving some thirty dead and sixty wounded behind.

Jack's own losses comprised a dozen men killed and something more than thirty wounded.

But Pablo Gomez had seen to bringing surgeons along, even if under protest.

A halt was made, Jack riding back to where Don Sebastian and his daughter had waited.

"I have the honor to report, your excellency, that the government troops have been defeated," was Jack's simple greeting, as he saluted the old man.

"We knew that they would be defeated," Anita replied, simply but very sweetly.

Close by the captured trenches the little army camped for the rest of the day.

"Now that we've won the first fight, it's time to send out smart runners after more recruits," Perry explained. "It's now or never to get most of the recruits that we'll need. Once we're close to Tegucigalpa we'll have the real Honduran army to fight. I don't like to stir further, your excellency, until we have at least a thousand men. Raymond agrees with me."

"It begins to seem less and less likely that we'll ever fight our way through to Tegucigalpa," sighed Don Sebastian.

"We're going to get there—somehow!" gritted Jack.
"We three call ourselves the Get-There Boys. We shall live up to that name, sir."

"I would urge you to wait until we have at least two thousand men," begged Dan Sebastian.

"One thousand will be enough, your excellency. With that number we move ahead, and trust to getting still more Indian recruits on the way."

Jack had his own way about it, though he was careful to consult with Colonel Raymond on every move that was made.

During the night that followed, hundreds more of recruits came in—all of them Indians stirred up by tales of the deeds of valor accomplished by the young white god sent down from their heaven to lead the redmen.

By morning Jack moved forward, at the head of more than a thousand men, all armed and equipped, and divided

into twenty companies—four small regiments now, and all commanded by Americans.

For three days they marched forward, without meeting any enemy.

Nor did they gain more than a few more recruits.

For now the road to Tegucigalpa lay through a desolate country.

By noon on the fourth day they were still forty miles from Tegucigalpa, which, in this wild, little-traveled country, meant at least four days more of marching.

And now news came back from Captain Rowley, commanding the advance guard, that put the little revolutionary army in a state of consternation.

"Our road disputed by the pick of the government's troops behind strong trenches," ran the report. "Our scouts learn from friendly Indians that the government has fifteen hundred of the flower of its army. I have halted for orders."

"It's the end for us," groaned Don Sebastian, when he read the report. "We have only a mob of a thousand against fifteen hundred regulars. What can you do now, General?"

"Send for my leading officers and hold a council-of-war," Jack replied, promptly. "If there are fifteen thousand of the enemy, Don Sebastian, we are going through to Tegucigalpa just the same! I have promised you that, and I shall keep my word."

"I wish I could see how you are to do it," sighed the old man.

"You can't, because you're not a military man," said Jack, cheekily.

But Anita's eyes shone with all the confidence in the world.

Jack was soon compelled to ride away.

The little column having halted, his principal officers were arriving for the council-of-war.

"I may as well tell you, sir," were Raymond's first words to his young General, "that it will be no joke this time. Nothing but wonderful leadership can give us any show. We can't even steal around the enemy, for their scouts would detect our move."

"Then you think-" began Perry, slowly.

"I am certain that we're already as good as defeated by a greatly superior force," rejoined the old soldier.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INSURGENTS DEFEATED AND SCATTERED.

"It's our only hope," spoke Jack, cheerily, when the long council had ended.

"A desperate one, but a good chance," approved Raymond, slowly.

"I'm blamed if I like it," uttered Tom Lannigan, bluntly.

"You don't really have to like it," Jack smiled, coolly.

"All you have to do, Tom, is to hold up your end. Do what's expected of you."

"But-__"

"Are you going to follow orders, Colonel Lannigan?"

"Sure I am."

"Then that's all, old fellow," said Jack, more pleasantly. By this time every fighting man in Don Sebastian's little force knew what was expected of him.

"Back to your command, gentlemen," Jack ordered, holding his watch in his hands. "In exactly fifteen minutes begin the advance. Carry it on with spirit, just as ordered."

"The time never dragged so before," complained our hero, staring at the dial of his watch.

"We were never in such a fearfully tight box before—that's why," grunted Mart.

But the time came at last. Off in the dark depths of the forest Perry heard his forces moving forward.

Jack's own men began the attack, firing through the forest when hardly less than half a mile from the position occupied by the government troops.

Back came the fire, hard and fierce.

More than that, the tempestuous infantry firing became deadly as the two forces got nearer to each other.

The government force was too strong and too confident to dislodge.

Gradually the insurgent advance was checked. The fire of the revolutionists became slower and more scattering.

Then through the forest rang a loud, eager, joyous yell: "Viva la administracion!"

It was the enemy's cheer of "Long live the government!" Truly it had its effect.

As the government's victorious troops charged through the forest, sending death on ahead by swift, stinging, steelcoated messengers in the form of bullets, the little army of revolutionists broke, fled, melted!

By dark the devoted little army that had hoped to seat Don Sebastian in the President's chair at the capital was scattered to the four winds of heaven.

Jack himself, on foot, and Mart with him, also dismounted, were plunging on blindly through the deep forest in the tracks of a single Indian guide.

Three days later.

Jack and Mart were still together in the great, vast tropical forest.

"I wonder how Tom's getting on."

"If he's still alive?" Mart hinted.

"Oh, he must be alive. Nobody could ever find a fellow in these immense woods."

"Going to tramp on again?" Mart asked.

"Yes; already. But I'm going to let you and the guide go ahead. I want to see if I can pick up any of our late comrades."

"You'll lose us in this great forest," predicted Mart Stanley.

"If I do, I can fire a shot and you can answer."

"And bring down some government soldiers on us," exploded Mart.

"I doubt it. We haven't seen any since yesterday morning. Go ahead, Mart, and remember that I won't be far behind."

Jack watched until his two companions were out of sight. Then, with a thoughtful look on his sun-bronzed face, he climbed the tallest tree that was near him.

While he stood there, in the topmost branches, Perry counted no less than six small, thin columns of smoke rising through the trees.

"Some one has found food to cook, or coffee to boil," he reflected. "It's mealtime. I thought I'd see the smoke. And all of those fires are within two or three miles of here."

Slowly he climbed down the tree again, at once trudging on in the direction taken by Mart and the guide.

Perhaps a quarter of a mile through the forest Jack had trudged, when he came upon a sight that made him actually sick with nervous dread.

There on the ground lay his Indian guide, dead.

"Great Scott!" quivered the boy. "And Mart? Where can he be?"

Nearby lay a swampy bit of a pool that covered something like half an acre.

"Can Mart have been killed, too, and thrown in there?" gasped the boy, sick with the horror of this silent forest tragedy. "And who could have done this ghastly thing? Are the enemy so close as that?"

Feverishly he scanned the ground. Ah, here, a little beyond, were footprints in the soft soil near the pool.

These prints extended almost due west.

"I'll catch up with that!" gritted Jack, as he started forward, spurred on by the determination either to find Mart or to avenge his death.

As he almost ran, Jack unslung his revolver from its holster.

He opened the weapon, to make sure that a cartridge was in every chamber.

Then, furiously, yet stealthily, he stole on through the forest.

In a few minutes something in the look of the trees ahead warned him that he was approaching a clearing.

He trod more cautiously than ever now, though hardly at less speed.

Then Jack Perry came close to the edge of the clearing. There, in the foreground, stood a small, thatched hut, under the shade of a great mango tree.

But the sight that held Jack chained, for a moment, in indignant, speechless horror, was the sight of Mart Stanley, lying on a litter to which he was bound hand and foot.

The litter was carried by two halfbreeds.

Beside the litter walked a sinister-looking scoundrel whom Jack recognized with a start of deadly resentment.

"Vasquez!" he thrilled. "Vasquez, the scoundrel who tried to murder me—who tried to shoot Don Sebastian—who tried to murder Anita! And now he is Mart's captor! Fortunately, we can soon change that. I understand, now, what a killing rage means!"

"This is my old home, Senor Gringo," Jack heard Vas-

quez say, sneeringly. "I lived here, sometimes, in the good old days when I was only Vasquez the bandit. That was before I had Commandante Banda for a friend."

He looked, quiveringly, ahead.

"Banda is only another kind of a bandit," Mart retorted, scornfully.

"You will do well not to be insulting, senor," warned Vasquez, meaningly. "You are mine now, to do as I please with. Oh, it was great good fortune that I should have come back to this part of the forest! You are mine—mine!"

"Is he?" rang Jack's voice across the clearing. "Look out for yourself!"

Vasquez turned, with a startled oath, as our hero darted forward, brandishing that ugly-looking revolver.

"This is your finish, you scum!" roared Jack.

Vasquez stood as if rooted to the spot.

But just as our hero neared the fellow he tripped on a root that crossed the ground.

But the boy was up again, like a flash, as the Honduran reached him.

"Vasquez, you snake of the jungle!" roared Perry, leaping forward and clinching.

The two rocked and swayed in that deadly embrace.

"Now we'll settle the whole long account!" challenged the American boy.

The Honduran, as he gripped at the barrel of that revolver, strove, with fiendish cunning, to get the weapon's muzzle in line with Perry's head!

By the exercise of a demon's strength, Vasquez was slowly getting the better of the struggle.

"Hold the rascal tight, General!" sounded a cool voice, It was Raymond's voice.

Jack, in desperation, tried to follow the advice.

But Vasquez, utterly startled, wrenched himself free and tried to run.

Crack! Vasquez fell, dead, ere he had run half a dozen steps.

Two more shots sounded, and Vasquez's fleeing half-breeds went to earth, their account booked for good.

"We heard your voice, and travelled fast, General," Raymond explained, as he and our hero hurriedly liberated Mart. "Mighty lucky we were as near, too, I guess."

"I'm glad you weren't with us, Jack," Mart gasped. "That was the quickest thing I ever saw. Neither the Indian nor I knew any one was near. First thing I knew a figure darted out from behind a tree and the guide went down. Then I was pounced on."

"Why didn't you shout for help?" Perry demanded.

"Vasquez told me he'd dig out both eyes and cut off my tongue if I yipped—and he'd have done it!" gasped Mart.
Jack turned to Raymond.

"Have you seen more of our people, Colonel?"

"No, sir; but the town of Vasca is a scant two miles ahead. We're likely to run into plenty of our people soon."

With a guide leading the way, the little column trudged morning. on until a signal from the guide halted them.

Down just ahead of them, in a hollow, lay a little pueblo, or town, of seven or eight buildings.

From one of these ran a telegraph wire.

"Any of our people there?" queried Jack, creeping forward.

"Yes, many of our men there," the guide replied, eagerly. "It's all right," nodded Raymond. "There's a slew of

our people in there already. The town is ours."

The rest of the march was hurried.

The little population of Vasca, consisting of less than forty people, turned out to watch the entry of Jack's small column.

More than sixty of his soldiers he found there already, with Rowley in command.

"Got here an hour ago, sir," Captain Rowley reported.

"That telegraph station is ours, of course?"

"Yes, sir, with six men watching the operator."

"Any messages gone through?"

"Not one, sir."

Jack strode over to the little telegraph office, followed by Mart.

Inside the thatched building, across the room from his instruments, sat the halfbreed operator, cowed by the presence of the half dozen Indian guards.

Jack regarded the instruments with interest. Then he turned to the operator.

"Where is General Honda, the commander of the government forces?" demanded the American boy. "Answer me truthfully, if you think life at all worth living!"

"He reported from Aricosa this morning," replied the operator, in a scared voice.

"Aricosa? That is seventeen miles to the east of here, is it not?"

"Yes, senor."

"Address me as General, you scoundrel!" scowled Perry. "What else did General Honda report to his government at Tegucigalpa?"

"He reported only his whereabouts," stammered the

operator.

"You are telling me the truth?" demanded Jack, harshly. "Because if you are not you stand a good chance of being burned at a stake!"

"I swear that I am telling the truth, sen—General!" stammered the frightened operator.

Click! click! sounded the key just then.

"Operator, take down the message that is coming," Jack ordered. "Mart, blow his head off if he writes down one letter wrong."

Trembling, the operator picked up his pen and began to write the message as it came over the wire.

"Rodriguez, Secretary of War, Tegucigalpa:

"No sign of the enemy in these last few days. Believed to have been utterly dispersed. Am at La Ortiz, and will march my force back to capital to-night and to-morrow morning.

"Honda, commanding."

"Oh, Honda will march his forces back in time to give us battle, will he, eh?" quivered Jack, as he read over the operator's shoulder. "Now we'll see about that! Operator, move away from your instrument."

Seating himself at the table, Jack wrote, rapidly:

"GENERAL HONDA, La Ortiz:

"At least two-thirds of revolutionary force located at Belascon. March there through the night and attack in the morning, by President Roquero's order. Do your best to exterminate the insurgents. Give no quarter. Telegraph understanding of this order.

"RODRIGUEZ, Secretary of War."

"Now, operator," suggested Jack, "be sure that you send this message right."

As the halfbreed returned to his instrument, and read the message through he trembled violently.

"It will be treason to send this!" he faltered.

"It will be death not to, or to make any mistake," Jack rejoined.

Trembling so that he could hardly manage his key, the operator sent the message, Mart standing by to see that it went absolutely straight.

Within five minutes the reply came clicking back.

General Honda understood, and would carry out the order received.

"That sends the enemy eighteen miles further east, while we go west," grinned Perry, turning to Raymond.

"It has worked wonderfully!" cried Raymond, admiringly.

Small detachments of revolutionists were now constantly arriving.

Jack's plan had worked even better than he had dared to hope it would.

General Honda's hostile force, already eleven miles to the eastward, had just received its orders to march eighteen miles further to the east.

By the time that Jack's little army was assembled, through the night, there would be next to nothing, in the way of troops, between the revolutionists and he capital.

It had been all Jack's own plan, his own little bit of brilliant strategy.

"We'll have the capital, with hardly a fight in the morning," Perry exclaimed, eagerly, to Tom Lannigan, when that Irish fighter arrived.

"Bad luck to a victory that's won without fighting!" growled Tom.

"You don't mean that!" protested Jack. "You don't wish bad luck to Don Sebastian!"

"Nor to the pretty little jewel of a girl, either," Lannigan grinnedly admitted.

An hour or so after dark Jack Perry had the great happiness of welcoming Don Sebastian and his daughter, who had travelled through the deep forests on litters carried by Indian soldiers.

"It's all too wonderful to believe!" cried the old man.
"Who but a Yankee could have thought of such a way of beating the enemy?"

"And it wouldn't have worked anywhere but in the great forests," Jack replied.

"It's wonderful, but I am not surprised," Anita said, softly, as she stood beside our hero, watching the arrival of more of the insurgent troops. "You can do anything, no matter how wonderful, my brave Americano. You have done everything that you promised."

"Except to seat your father in the president's chair,"

smiled happy Jack.

"That will be done to-morrow," replied Anita, looking up at him with the softest light in her great, dark, glorious eyes. "That will be done, since you have promised it, my General!"

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

At daylight in the morning the pretty little capital of Tegucigalpa rubbed its eyes in consternation.

Silently, almost like so many ghosts, the little revolutionary army marched into the town.

The sun was not yet well up as Jack's "army" marched on down the sweetly shaded streets of the town, between the rows of clean, white buildings.

Into the big plaza around the Presidental palace rode Colonel Raymond, accompanied by three of his comrades.

Ahead of them rode an orderly, bearing aloft a white flag.

The insurgent army had halted in four columns, along the four streets leading down to the plaza.

Over on the palace grounds the President's bodyguard were hastily throwing up intrenchments.

"Para!" (halt!) came a sharp order from behind the half-finished intrenchments.

Then two officers of the President's guard came hastily forth under a white flag of their own.

"We demand that President Roquero surrender," said Raymond, simply.

"Who makes the demand?" queried one of the officers of the guard.

"General John Perry," was Raymond's quiet answer.

"He is not a Honduran."

"No; but he commands Honduran troops."

"Not the troops of this nation," answered the President's officer, sharply.

"Our men will be the troops of the nation," retorted Raymond, more sharply. "In less than an hour they will be the troops of the nation, for Senor Don Sebastian Lopez will proclaim himself President of Honduras."

"This is treason."

"No, not treason," smiled Raymond, pleasantly. "Treason is revolution that fails. Our revolution has won."

"Won?" came the sharp retort. "Not until you have entered the palace over the dead bodies of all the guard!"

"We can do it, and are prepared to," came Raymond's challenge. "But if we fight we shall kill every last man

of the guard, and we shall hang Senor Roquero in the streets of this capital. Go; you have our message for your master."

"But what are the terms if we yield to force?" asked the officer of the guard.

"Then the guard and its officers may remain in the Honduran army, and Senor Roquero shall be a prisoner only until the new government can provide for his banishment from the country."

"These are not the terms of a generous conqueror," pleaded the officer.

"They are the only terms..

"Will Don Sebastian Lopez grant no better."

"Don Sebastian did not grant these. Until he is proclaimed president, he has nothing to do with terms."

"Then who makes such terms?"

"The American leader of the army that you see just beyond—General John Perry."

"We will retire, and mention your terms to his excellency, President Roquero."

"That won't do any good, unless there is prompt surrender," returned Colonel Raymond, bluntly. "In fifteen minutes from now, if you have not hoisted the white flag of surrender, then General Perry will give the signal for a general attack. If that happens, nothing can then save any man found at the palace. Do you understand?"

"If you will wait here, senor, we may have something to say from his excellency, the President."

"I'll not wait," grunted the American soldier. "You can say nothing more to us. You can surrender or fight. It is your choice. But there shall be no further parley. Now back to your master, and—remember, in fifteen minutes, if you have not surrendered, we advance to wipe out the last man of you!"

Wheeling squarely around on his horse, Raymond led his comrades back to where Jack Perry sat, anxiously waiting.

"I have given the message," Raymond reported.

"Nothing remains but to back up our part," Jack replied, anxiously. I hope they won't force us to make our word good. It would be a shame to have a bloody slaughter at the end."

"Five minutes have gone by," reported Raymond, presently.

"Ten minutes," he added, later.

Jack, as he kept his anxious gaze turned on the palace gate, slowly drew the revolver with which he would fire, if necessary, the signal shot for the general attack on the palace.

"Fourteen minutes!" came from Raymond's lips.

"Wait! Look! What's that going up?" cried Perry. "The white flag! The palace surrenders, and here come the officers of the President's guard!"

Five Honduran officers in full-dress, but wearing no weapons, entered the plaza and crossed it, coming down the side street where our hero waited.

"We have surrenderd," called the commander of the guard. "President Roquero is no more."

"What?"

"He has just ended his life with a bullet!"

Solemnly the little revolutionary army moved forward, occupying the palace grounds.

Within the hour Don Sebastian Lopez had been proclaimed provisional President of the Republic of Honduras, and an election had been ordered six weeks hence to determine whether the country wished Don Sebastian to continue as President.

That election, when it came off, resulted in the triumphant confirming of Don Sebastian as President.

Jack and his two chums remained in the service of the Honduran government only until after the election.

Raymond and his five comrades, on the contrary, remained in the Honduran army, and are still among its officers.

It was not a work of great difficulty to persuade the Indians that their "white" leader has done his full duty in securing for them a more honest government.

Commandante Banda escaped from the country to Europe, but his property in the little republic was confiscated.

Senor Gomez became, and still is, secretary of war.

But Jack Perry has become, and still is, something infinitely better.

He is the proud and happy husband of Anita Lopez.

The Get-There Boys remained in Honduras. They are now prosperous planters, who come once in a while to New York.

Both Tom and Mart have married—Tom Lannigan having chosen a Honduran bride, while Mart chose an old sweetheart whom he had left behind at home.

There have been no recent revolutions in Honduras, nor are there likely to be.

The people are satisfied with Don Sebastian as President. Besides, the people know the folly of trying to unseat this President while he is able to command the services of such friends as the Get-There Boys!

THE END.

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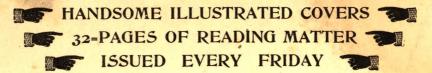
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